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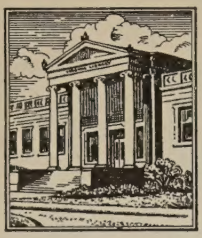
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SERMONS

BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER,

PLYMOUTH CHURCH, BROOKLYN.

SELECTED FROM PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED DISCOURSES,
AND REVISED BY THEIR AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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I.

Christian Waiting.

Preached in Zion Church, Charleston, S. C., April 16, 1865.

[Mr. Beecher, who went to Charleston to deliver the address on the occasion of raising the flag over Fort Sumter, gave subsequently to his own Church the following account of the circumstances under which this discourse was preached.

"There was one church in which I ministered myself. It was my privilege to preach in Charleston on Sunday morning at Zion Church—the African church. About three thousand people were there. Enough of them were white to say that there were white people there. There were a number of officers, and a few strangers present; but the great body of the house was filled with the intelligent part of the colored population of Charleston. I know not that I shall ever preach with such sensations again. I have preached about slaves and slavery; but to stand in the midst of such a great audience, and feel, "Here they are, and they are now come to life and to light," struck me through with such sensations as I never had before.

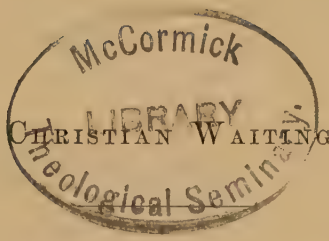
"One little incident was peculiarly charming to my feelings. I gave out, for the second hymn,

'Daughter of Zion, from the dust
Exalt thy fallen head.'

"You will find it to be an almost perfect description of Charleston itself. There sat, four or five pews in front of me, seven or eight old men that attempted to choir it—for they were going to be respectable, and sing as white folks do. I did not go to hear them sing so: I went to hear black folks sing in their own way, and was thirsty for the old negro melodies, the wild, wailing, half-chant tunes which I had heard so much about. But I got only church music in the first singing. I was obliged to line out the words. I repeated again,

'Daughter of Zion, from the dust
Exalt thy fallen head,'

and looked down to see if they were going to sing; and, while these men were getting ready, there broke out on my left the voice of a young maiden, apparently twelve or thirteen years of age, in one of their characteristic plantation melodies. She went through the first line before another voice was heard. Every body looked at his neighbor in surprise. On the next line a few voices joined hers. And on the next about a third of the audience took up the hymn and sang it to the end. I know not whether this young maiden thought that I had called her when I said 'Daughter of Zion' [laughter], but the style of singing in which she led off was just what I wanted to hear."]



CHRISTIAN WAITING.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evil doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth."—PSALM xxxvii., 3–9.

WHEN you have nothing to do, and there is nothing to produce anxiety, it is easy to wait—for it is laziness; and all men are apt by nature to be lazy. But when there is any thing that you do care about, and that you have set your heart upon, it is very hard to wait, especially if the thing does not come as soon as you expect it to. Waiting is easy when it is sinful, and hard when it is a duty. The Bible is full both of instances of patient waiting, and of exhortations and explanations respecting the duty and benefit of waiting—of waiting, not because you can not help yourself; of waiting, not because you can not do any thing else, but of waiting in the sense of waiting on God; of waiting, because you believe that God governs in this world; that he will bring to pass, in his own time, righteousness, justice, and truth, and that, therefore, you can afford to wait as long as he will have you. That is the ground of true Christian waiting.

We are very much hindered in our Christian duty of patient waiting by the habit of looking at things in their minute parts, each particular day, without considering that every thing that happens in this world is part of a great plan

of God that runs through all time, culminating in eternity, and that we are to regard daily events as only elements of greater events that require long periods for their consummation.

What is God doing in this world? By day and by night, in light and in darkness, by good and by evil, by his friends and by his enemies, God is building up a kingdom among men. He is laying the foundations of it as broad as the earth, and he will carry up the superstructure as high as the heavens. God is the architect. God is superintending the work, and all men are his workmen. There are many men who are glad to help God build this world-kingdom of righteousness, and who do it on purpose; but there are millions and millions of men who think, while they are hewing, and sawing, and shaping wood, and quarrying and chiseling stone, and working, that they are building a house for themselves, and that they are carrying out their own plans; while God, that sits far above all men, sees that they are working for him, and that the materials with which many of them meant to build their own house are going into the foundations of the house that he is building. He sees that all those evil influences by which men are seeking to defeat righteousness and overthrow justice in this world are made in the end to promote righteousness and justice.

This kingdom of God is not a kingdom that you can handle. It is not a kingdom with an earthly king in it. It is not a kingly city whose walls are of stone and mortar. It is a kingdom of righteousness. It is that kingdom which the Master says "cometh not with observation." It is not physical. When a man reaches out his hand, there are two things concerned in the act: there is an inward power that says "Do it," and there is the outside hand that does it. There is an unseen influence on the brain—the mind, the will; and there is the visible object, the hand.

Every one sees in this illustration the difference between spirit and matter. The mind is one part of a man's being,

and the body is another. You can see the body. That which governs it you can not see. You can not see a thought, though you can see what thought brings to pass. You can not see a feeling, though you can see the effect which that feeling produces. You can not see justice, though you can see what justice does.

God, then, is building up a kingdom that is invisible; a kingdom that can not be discerned by the outward man; a spiritual kingdom of holy thoughts, of pure feelings, of faith, of hope, of righteousness. This kingdom advances little by little. It is carried forward by a myriad of different causes. God administers it himself, and he means that it shall be perfected. He is determined that the whole world shall be filled with his glory, and that all mankind shall be righteous.

This kingdom progresses very slowly. It meets with great opposition—so great that sometimes you can not tell whether it is going backward or forward. Unless a man has a great deal of faith, and a great deal of experience, he will often be placed in circumstances where it will seem to him as though every thing was retrograding; as though men were growing worse and worse; as though injustice was increasing, and righteousness was diminishing; as though those who strove to be good were of no account, and only the evil were honored. But God, that is building this great kingdom, sees that though, on account of its magnitude, it is slowly advancing, yet it is advancing surely.

You can not build a great house so quick as you can a small one. You can not build a city so quick as you can a hut or a hovel. If God was going to build his kingdom in one family, he might do it quickly; but as he is to do it in all the families of every country, the work is so vast that it can not be done in a day, nor in a year, nor in a hundred years, nor in many rolling ages. It takes time to build things that are to be so well built and so glorious as God's kingdom will be when it is completed. And we are living in an age that resists this work of God—sometimes on purpose, and sometimes not knowing what it does.

Man grows, first, as an animal; next, as a social being; and, lastly, as one having a spiritual and religious nature. And as it is with individual men, so it is with the world at large. At first the nations of the earth are nations of savages; then they begin to be half civilized; then they become more fully civilized; then in some degree Christianized. But their laws are still imperfect, and their customs are yet crooked. Selfishness reigns on every hand, and the world is full of permitted wickedness. There remain to be thrown out of the kingdom of Christ many antagonistic influences, such as pride, lust, impurity, and corruption. But this kingdom works its way, little by little, through laws, and customs, and antagonistic influences, and will go on working its way through them, till, by-and-by, righteousness shall become victorious. It moves slowly, but certainly.

You tell your child that this pine-tree out here in the sandy field is one day going to be as large as that great sonorous pine that sings to every wind in the wood. The child, incredulous, determines to watch and see whether the field pine really does grow and become as large as you say it will. So, the next morning, he goes out and takes a look at it, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a particle." At night he goes out and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown a bit." The next week he goes out, and looks at it again, and comes back and says, "It has not grown any yet. Father said it would be as large as the pine-tree in the wood, but I do not see any likelihood of its becoming so."

How long did it take that pine-tree in the wood to grow? Two hundred years. The men who lived when it began to grow have been buried, and generations besides have come and gone since then.

And do you suppose that God's kingdom is going to grow so that you can look at it and see that it has grown during any particular day? You can not see it grow. All around you are things that are growing, but that you can not see grow.

And if it is so with trees, and things that spring out of the ground, how much more is it so with the kingdom of God! That kingdom is advancing surely, though it advances slowly, and though it is invisible to us.

You will remember our Master's beautiful parable, where he says, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." I suppose you know what that means. I go into your kitchen, where you are baking bread, and ask, "What is that you are stirring into that flour?" You say "It is yeast." I ask, "What is it for?" You say "It is to raise the bread." I imagine that it is to raise it in a way that shall be perceptible to my senses, and say, "Let me see it do it." You set the bread away in a warm place, or, at the South, in a cool place, if you can find one, and you say, "Now it will rise." After watching it closely for a while, I say to you, "I do not see that it has risen at all." You say, "Bless you, my child, you can not see it rise!" I go away, and stay till I think it will have come up, if there is any such thing as its coming up, and then go back, but I can not see that it has undergone any change. I wait, and wait, and wait, and at last say, "I do not believe it is going to rise." And you say, "It has risen already," and tear it open; and lo! it is full of holes; and you say, "Now do not you believe that it has risen? It has been rising all the time, only you could not see it rise."

Christ says that his kingdom is just like that. It is a great kingdom, which extends all over the world, and into which he has put the leaven of divine grace. That grace is like yeast, and it works in this kingdom of Christ. You can not see it, even if you watch for it; but there it is; and if, after a while, you go and look at it, you will be convinced that it has been working, by the results which it has produced. You will find that things have been done, though you could not see them done. Men are becoming better the world over, though you can not trace the process by which

they are becoming better. Christ's kingdom goes forward from age to age, though you can not discern the steps by which it is going forward. While men, as individuals, pass off from the stage of life, God's work does not stop.

When men make a chain, they make the links separately, and join the second to the first, the third to the second, the fourth to the third, and so on till the chain is completed; and it is good for nothing if any link is left out.

We are links of that chain which God is making. Here is a man that undertakes a good work in this world, and carries it forward a certain distance, and then dies. But that work does not stop. Another man takes it up where he left it, and carries it forward still farther, and then he dies. Another man takes it up where he left it, and carries it forward farther yet. And so on, this one, and that one, and others that follow them, are links of an endless chain that shall reach to the very heaven.

For instance, you want to teach men to read. There were those that lived before you, who made types and printer's ink. They did their work and died. Others took it up where they left it. Books began to be manufactured. Printing-presses were brought into requisition. These men worked, but did not know what they were working for. They died, and you came into active life. You found the instruments for your work already at hand. Books! It took ages to produce them. There may be a hundred generations of lives in one book. And yet, when you want to open schools, you find books as abundant and as cheap as bread.

Thus one set of men, not knowing what they do, bring down the work of God's kingdom to a given point; others, not knowing what they do, bring it down still farther; and it goes on, stretching out, and stretching out, and will not stop until it is consummated. There is a current setting straight on down through the ages. Every successive period of civilization has gone up higher. The old Oriental civilization, Roman civilization, the Middle-Age civilization, and

modern civilization, are steps, one rising above another. There is a tendency in the affairs of the world to go on to perfection. God's Bible predicts that the time shall come when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters fill the sea; and that time *is* coming.

Here, then, is the foundation of our faith, our hope, our patient waiting. We are to rest on the fact that God is carrying on a work in this world; that he never forgets that work; that he never lets it lag or linger; that it is ever going forward, though we may not see it advance, and though it may seem to be receding. God has declared that every thing shall work together for good to them that are his. And the Christian heart, relying on this declaration, says, "If this was a world that had no God, I should be in utter despair; but it is not. Though I am in trouble, and though relief does not come as soon as I could wish it might, there is a God that knows every thing, and that looks after the welfare of every human being; and I put my trust in him. He is carrying on his work. It will certainly be finished. When, therefore, my Bible says 'Wait patiently,' there is good reason in it."

I proceed to make some applications founded on this general view:

1. There are many men who do not believe in these truths. They can not see any sense in them. When we talk about schools, and churches, and orphan asylums, and benevolent associations, and philanthropic measures, and the glorious future which such instrumentalities are helping to hasten on, they sit by and sneer, and croak, and say, "Great expectations! Fanaticism! What fools, to suppose that you can make any thing out of such stuff as men! Look at mankind. See how men deal with each other. Even what are called *Christians* you will never trust out of your sight. I have seen your ministers, your churches, your missionary societies, your temperance societies, and your schools attempting to work up the poor trash into something great and noble, but it is all folly. You can not do any thing of the kind."

These are shallow men. They do not look very deeply into affairs! There are thousands of them. They are men without faith. They are men without any belief in the overruling providence of God. They judge of things simply by the surface. They are men that, if they had just come to America, and found a chestnut-tree, and seen the burs, could not be convinced that chestnuts were good for any thing, and that would say, "Who would eat such prickly things as those?" But when the frost touches the bur, it opens a case with a satin lining as fine as that of any lady's dressing-case, and discloses a little nut that has been swelling and ripening for many a day; and I never saw a man that would not eat the chestnut when it was out of the bur.

There are many men that, because the beginnings of Christ's kingdom in this world are rude; because some that profess to belong to that kingdom are traitors; because some are backsliders; because some are insincere and hypocritical persons; and because the processes of the divine work are carried on through circuits too wide for them to understand, say, "It is folly to be talking about advancing the world. It is a poor, mean world, and we must make the best of it. Eat, drink, and be merry, O soul, for to-morrow you shall die." Yes, and perish! For God sits in judgment, and though the day of his coming seems to be long delayed, it is surely drawing nigh; and though scoffers arise, "walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," nevertheless "the heavens and the earth *are* reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men," while, with strong assurance of faith, resting on the pledged word of God, we look for the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness."

2. Consider the folly of the discouragement which many feel because men are so imperfect, particularly those who go from a higher to a lower state of society. In the army the

soldier learns to put up with things that are worse than those which he has been accustomed to. No soldier, when he is on a raid, thinks of having a parlor like his mother's, or of sitting down in a kitchen before a fire when he is wet and cold, as he has often done in his father's house. He is contented if he can find a dry spot under a tree to lie down on. He makes up his mind that he must adapt himself to his circumstances. But many men go down into states of society very different from those to which they have been used, and, because there are not men enough to do the work; because some men are clumsy and rude; because some are deceitful and dishonest; because men are just what they always have been, they are disgusted. They can not get along with the imperfections that they meet on every hand. They have no patience with them. They can not wait for a better condition of things to come about through the processes of time and divine power. To such men the word is, "Wait on the Lord; wait patiently; and by-and-by he shall give you the desire of your heart."

There is no use of our being in any more haste than God. He goes fast enough. He will not let you go any faster than he goes. And who are you, that cry because you can not run before God? Be sure that you keep up with him; be sure that when he takes a step you step too, and step lively, and then you will not need to have any concern.

3. Consider the folly of envying wicked men when they are in power, and thinking that perhaps it is worth while to be as wicked as they are.

If the senior officer is a drinking, swearing, unscrupulous man, many young men under him say to themselves, "Have I not been tied up a little too tight? Did father and mother know as much as I thought they did? Here are men that are educated, that hold high positions, and that are confessedly men of ability and worth, and do not they drink? Do not they swear? Are they not unscrupulous? And what am I, that I should set myself up against them, and judge

them to be wrong? They rise, and become distinguished, and every body helps them, while the man that is conscientious in his habits, and is modest and retiring, is helped by nobody, and stays where he is, and is unknown. Those men that are of a reckless, dare-devil nature are the men that prosper and get along. And, after all, it seems to me that it is best that a man should not be too conscientious."

This is the very thing that the psalmist says you must not do. "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil, neither be thou envious against workers of iniquity." Their prosperity, says the psalm, in effect, is at the beginning, and not at the end. The prosperity of wicked men is like opium-eating. When men eat opium, they at first experience feelings of ecstasy, and they see visions, and dream dreams, and have a glorious hour or two; but when they have gone through these pleasant experiences, then what have they? Purgatory on earth! The after part is hideous to them in the proportion in which the fore part was agreeable.

Wicked men do prosper for a little while; but, as sure as God lives, in the end they shall have their just reward. If you consider the whole of life from end to end, then truth, and honor, and purity, and justice, and fidelity pay. If you want to grow quickly, you can grow quickly by wickedness, but you will not last. If you want to grow so as to last, you must adhere to integrity, and you must be contented to grow slowly, if God ordains it. You can grow a mushroom or a toad-stool in one night, if you have a dunghill large enough; but to grow an oak-tree, that shall last for generations, requires vastly more time. And if you want men that shall last, you must wait till they can be built up solidly by good conduct; by confidence inspired by good conduct; in other words, by being tried.

One ship is as good as another in the harbor. It is outside of the harbor that the comparative merits of different vessels are made to appear. There their qualities, whether superior or inferior, show themselves. It is what ships do

on the sea that determines that one is better or worse than another.

And as with ships, so with men. Two men start about alike on the morn of life. They go along, at first, about together. But follow them five or ten years, and about the fifth, the sixth, or the seventh year, the one—a man of pleasure, a godless man, a man that does not believe in a divine supervision of the affairs of this world—begins to degenerate; while the other—a sober, Christian man, who believes that God controls the world and all that are in it—in the beginning lays his foundation, going down so deep that he seems for a time to burrow like a marmot; but then, little by little, he begins to work upward, and he builds so that every hour men see that he is building strongly and surely.

Young men, you who are under circumstances in which the bad example of wicked men tempts you, do not be tempted by the wickedness of any body. Do not covet that prosperity which sin brings. It will be overtaken by condign punishment. In the end it will have its due reward.

A young man sits at the table, and gratifies his appetite with whatever it craves. His physician, who sits by his side, says to him, "You can not indulge in such stimulating drinks without endangering your life." "Oh," says the young man, "I shall feel as well after my meal as you will after yours. These wines and liquors do me good, and I shall drink them." He goes on disregarding his physician's advice day after day, week after week, and month after month, and then comes the autumnal fever, and he is prostrated by it, and others catch it as well as he; but the man that would not take stimulating drinks has constitution enough to go through his sickness, while the man that persisted in taking them breaks down under the pressure of sickness, and dies, because he has destroyed his constitution by indulgence. And so that which the doctor foresees comes to pass.

Now what the doctor tells you about your stomach, I tell

you about your character. If you want to build so as to break down even in this life, build as worldly men tell you to; but if you want to build so that you shall abide throughout eternity, build as God Almighty tells you to.

In society you see how the worst men, sometimes, are envied most. They live in splendid houses. They have convocations of pleasure. Pride compasses them about as a chain. Violence covers them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than heart could wish. They carry their head loftily. They speak wickedly concerning oppression. They say, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" We have living examples of the prosperity of wicked men.

But what says the psalmist? "When I sought to know these things, they were too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors."

Do not envy wicked men! God sends thunderbolts after them. He that never sleepeth watches them, and never loses sight of them, and pursues them, and will overtake them, and, when it suits his purpose, will bring upon them his retributive judgments, and utterly destroy them. Be willing to be poor, but be not willing to be dishonest. Be willing to be despised, but be not willing to be corrupted. Be willing to be humble here for the sake of exaltation hereafter.

Did you ever read on this subject the remarkable language of James? Some of you have, but perhaps others of you have not. I will read a part of the fifth chapter: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together

for the last days. Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you. Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Do not be impatient. Do not be revengeful. Leave every thing to God. He will take care of you.

4. There is an application of this subject, also, to those that are in trouble. I had almost said, Who is not in trouble in these times of war and confusion? Is there a man, woman, or child in the land down from whose eyes have not fallen big tear-drops? There rises up through the silent air a requiem of sorrow in which every state in the Union joins and keeps time. All over the country there is jubilee in the graveyards! All through the nation, trouble, sadness, bereavement reigns! Some of it I know not how one can bear. If I had given my son in a bad cause, and lost him, and lost the cause too, the mercy of God might perhaps comfort me in the life to come, but I see not how any consolation could reach me in this world. But if any man has been called to suffer, or to yield up those that were dear to him as his own flesh and blood in the noble cause of justice and liberty, he has not lost any thing any more than you have lost your corn when you have planted it. You planted it in the hope that it would sprout and bring forth a harvest. And our dead, that have died for patriotic reasons, have died in the Lord, and come forth again. Oh, how dark it seems when they are cut off! When the only son of the widowed mother is taken from her; when, in the hour of defeat, he goes down to the grave, who

can find argument of consolation? And yet there are considerations which lessen the poignancy of grief, where the fallen one laid down his life in the faithful service of his country.

When that noble son of Massachusetts led the colored regiment in their charge on Fort Wagner, he succeeded apparently in nothing but in vindicating the heroism of the black man. When there he fell, and was buried in a promiscuous heap with his own men, the whole North felt the shock. Yesterday, as I walked along the ramparts beneath which his bones lie—we know not precisely where—I felt, No monarch in Europe, sitting on his throne, has done half so much for his kingdom as this our gallant Shaw has done for his country. We planted him, and God has given him a glorious resurrection, and by his example he is exerting a tremendous moral power throughout this land. He is a host, because he was a martyr.

And that young Dahlgren, who brought to us again the very ideas of chivalry, and who sacrificed himself, though brutally maltreated by his enemies—is he dead? Though dead, he yet speaketh. He was like a sacrifice offered upon the altar, and God will be more propitious toward this nation for his blood that was shed.

Have we lost our men because God has added them to the angel host? Are we in darkness because they have gone from our side whom God wanted in the higher army? They are separated from their earthly generals, but they bear the banner of the Lord God of battles in the realm above.

We have no need to hurry. Wait patiently. Trust in God. Do not give up your faith.

5. I have a word for my colored friends that are present. You certainly have learned to wait. God forbid that I should say a word to inspire in you vanity, pride, or any evil feeling. The devil will not fail to tempt you in a great many ways. You ought to be most watchful. You have an enemy that is like a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may de-

vour, but you need not fear him. It is not many men that lions catch. Your most dangerous enemies are like serpents in the grass. Among them are vanity, pride, impertinence, indolence, carelessness, dishonesties, and complainings. There is not one serpent merely, but there are many serpents gliding about to sting you. You have great need to guard against them.

Bear witness, ye old praying saints! you that have worn out the watches of the night in tears and prayers before God, and thought that he delayed—bear witness that he has not forsaken you! You have seen your children go from you; you have prayed that they might be restored to you; years and years have gone by, and now some of them have come back, and your prayers have been answered in their return. Some of them have not come back yet; but I say that, in the light of the experience which has been vouchsafed to you, you have strong ground for hope. Wait. You will yet see them. And if you do not see them in this world, what is far better, you will see them in the world to come. They are not forgotten of God, though man has forgotten them. They are not scattered from the fold of God, even if they are scattered from your little band. God has taken care of them. And I say to you, "Wait patiently." Having waited so long, and got so much, do you not know enough to wait longer, and to believe that God will give you more? Ah! if, watching in the night, you have waited till twelve o'clock, you can wait till one; and if you have waited till one, you can wait till two; and if you have waited till two, you can wait till three; and if you have waited till three, it will be daylight at four; wait till five; and if you have waited till five, behold! the sun is above the mountains. Rise up, children of light, for the day is upon you!

You have waited long, and what has God brought to you? Your liberty! Take this great boon and make good use of it. Let men see that you can be free without being destroyed. Teach your children. Seek instruction yourselves.

Learn to read, that you may be able to read God's Bible. Be better men and women. If you have any great sins, break away from them. If there is any thing in which you know that you are wrong, correct that thing at once. You owe yourselves to God as thank-offerings for the mercies which you have received at his hands; and see to it that you live such godly lives as you have never lived before. I hear good accounts of you. I thank God for the tidings that have come to my ears concerning your conduct. I only pray that every one of you may consecrate himself, as a free man, to the service of Christ. Only four months ago every one of you, if you had come to Christ, would have had to come saying, "Lord Jesus, here I am, a poor creature. I have no flag, and no country. Nobody cares for me. I want to give you something, but I have not much to give. I have no fields and no harvests. I can only bring you a little flower or something from the wayside. I have nothing to give you but my poor heart, and I am a slave." But now you can come to Christ and say, "I have something better—I have a freeman's heart."

And who is there here that will be so mean, when God has done so much for him, as to go and get drunk, or steal, or lie, or gamble? What man is there among you that, when God has been so kind to you, and done so much for you—when he has broken your bonds and set you free—will not give to God the life that is before him?

Mothers in Israel, I expect to hear from you that you love more and love better than you did before. Fathers, whose days are almost spent, I expect to hear from you that you are inspiring the young with a better example, and with more godly counsels, and that you pray more than ever. You that are young, I expect to hear from you that you are growing up to be worthy and useful men and women. And you that have gone into the service of your country, may God make you valiant, faithful, and true. And, by-and-by, when the vote is put into your hand, make as good a use of that as you now do of the musket.

6. What people ought to be able more than this American people to bear testimony that God is good? And who more than we ought to have patience now with imperfect things? I meet with many men who are in great trouble. They tell me that the generals of our army are not all that they ought to be. Are they not? That is surprising! I supposed that every one of our generals was a perfect man! They tell me that the government does not do the best things all the time. Why, it is astonishing! I am amazed that the government does not always do the best things!

Was there ever a government that was not obliged to do things imperfectly? Was there ever a government that was not compelled to employ imperfect instruments? Was there ever a general that was not an imperfect man? Washington had his imperfections. All men, from the beginning of the world to this day, have had their imperfections. Now I do not excuse men for their wrong-doings; but this I say: In this day of release and victory, shall men forget the good and see only the evil? Shall we sit like frogs by the pools croaking, croaking the night long? or shall we, like birds, sing God's praises that the night is past and day at hand? Remember that you must creep before you walk; that, from the nature of things, there must be crudeness before ripeness, and that there can not but be more or less that is wrong. And having come to this conclusion, wait. Do not be impatient. Live in hope. Things will come out right—if not to-day, then to-morrow. Evils will steadily correct themselves. Give the government time. Give our public men time. If you could see inside of their hearts, you would see that most of them, according to the power that God gave them, are doing all they can to advance the right. And if you find fault with them, and complain, and look on the dark side, you will be taking sides with the devil, who is called *the accuser of the brethren.* Wait patiently, and God will bring things right by-and-by.

Look at the condition of the South. When sometimes I

have insisted that she was yet to have glorious times, men have laughed and said, "I suppose you have not been along the line of Sherman's march?" No, I have not. But my faith is not in proximate causes. It is in my unswerving belief that God is governing, and that he is carrying on a work which he will consummate in righteousness. The South is far better off without slavery than she was with it, no matter how much poverty and suffering there is now within her borders. I will tell you what she was like. When our Master came down from the mountain of transfiguration, there was brought to him, you know, a person possessed of the devil. When Jesus saw the child, the devil threw him on the ground, and tore him, and he lay foaming and wallowing. And Christ said to the foul spirit, "I charge thee, come out of him." And he cried, and rent the boy; and when he came out of him, the boy lay upon the ground, and men said, "He is dead! *he is dead!*" They would rather have had him alive, even though he had a devil in him, than to have had him dead; but Christ thought it better to have the devil cast out, even if it killed the child. But it did not kill him; for he lay only a moment to get strength, and then, at the touch of Christ, rose up, restored and in his right mind.

Now the South lies wallowing on the ground. The devil, of which she has been long possessed, has rent her sore and cast her on the ground. And now she lies as dead, insomuch that many say she *is* dead. But I hear the voice of Christ saying "she is not dead; she sleeps." And ere long she shall wake, and rise to a better manhood than she has ever before attained. There was never before such a good time for the South as there is to-day. I would rather have her in her laceration, and poverty, and bereavement, as she is to-day, than to have her as she was in her palmy days of wealth, when every port was a mart for slaves, when every plantation was a place of bondage, and when every man was making money by treading God's image under foot, and violating every canon of humanity. She is richer to-day

than she ever was before, because she has got rid of the incarnate fiend of which she was possessed. Tell me, when was Judas richest; when he was following Christ without money in his pocket, or after he had betrayed Christ, when he had thirty pieces of silver in his pocket? He is rich that follows Christ and obeys God's laws, and not he that has money.

But consider that great work which has been brought upon us by the events of our time—the work of educating and caring for the colored men of the South. A great many men laugh us to scorn when we tell them what we are going to do for the elevation of the negro, and try to discourage us by picturing the sufferings that he will have to undergo. There are ten men to ridicule and hinder this work where there is one to help it forward. We are aware that we shall have difficulties to overcome. That there will be suffering we do not doubt. It is not possible to change any condition of society, and not have, during that transition period, more or less of suffering. A whole community can not be passed through a period of war, of revolution, and emancipation without vast suffering of every sort. Of these people, many will die of hunger. Many will be shot down. Many families will be scattered. In many instances they will suffer more than they would have suffered on the plantation. But this suffering is indispensable to a better state that is to follow.

The old colored man was wise who, at Fortress Monroe, said, "I've been praying all my life for this time to come; and, now that it has come, I sha'n't live to enjoy it; but that's no matter. I've got to die; but ah! the *chil'en*—they'll live to enjoy it."

Many saints, whose days are almost ended, will sit on the top of the mountain, and look into the promised land, who will not be permitted to enter into it. Liberty is coming, intelligence is coming, citizenship is coming, but many of you will not see these things. You are going to die in the wilderness. But ah! Israel will be free!

Pray on, then. Trust in God! Do not listen to any one who would make you discontented. I beseech of you, have faith, not in man, but in him that loved you, that redeemed you with his precious blood, that sitteth on high, and that hath decreed that every yoke shall be broken, and that the oppressed shall go free.

I remember that I am speaking where I never expected to preach—at least in my youth. I did not know but I should preach here when I was a very old man—so old that nobody would be afraid of me; but God has permitted me to stand here while I am yet strong. And he is my witness that my joy is not merely the joy of a man who exults over an enemy subdued. I joy in the Holy Ghost. I joy in the wiping out of the disgraceful fact that any worthy citizen of the United States of America—the country that boasts of larger liberty than any other nation on earth—should not be permitted to go where he chose in his own land. There never has been a period in my lifetime when I could go south of Mason and Dixon's line except at the risk of my life. I have been excluded from half the states of this Union, not because I was convicted of any crime, but merely because I believed in the doctrine of the Declaration of Independence. But things are changed; and I am here in Charleston! And my feeling toward those that have withheld from me privileges which belong to every man under a free government is not, "Ah! now you are down, and we have got our feet on your neck!" I am sorry for them, as I am for all wrong-doers. I would, so far as it is consistent with justice, bind up their wounded hearts and help them. No, I do not rejoice in their overthrow. In this is my joy: that Charleston is free, and that there is not a man in the United States, unconvicted of crime, who may not walk through her streets in safety. My joy is in this: that through Georgia, and Alabama, and the Carolinas—through every state in all this land where float the Stars and Stripes, any American, not guilty of misdemeanors, can walk freely and safely. There is

now nothing that divides us, and nothing that threatens us. That is the ground of my rejoicing, and in view of that I can never rejoice enough. I never can pay God for the benefits that I have received. But my personal good is as nothing compared with the good of my country, which is the dearest land on earth. And now she has gone through a crisis which, let us hope, will end in perfect health. She has passed the peril of her youth, and is entering upon a sound manhood, and is to be a power on the globe. For this I thank God, and bless his name, and rejoice.

And now, Christian friends and brethren, all, I call upon you, by the great mercies of God, to present yourselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God. Do not tarnish his inestimable gifts by selfishness. Consecrate your hearts at once to the divine service. Be willing to work, and let others have the praise. Be willing to work, and let others reap the fruits of your labor. Be like Christ, who gave his life to save men. Be more noble. Heroically bear your cross. Carry your burden without a murmuring. It is only a little while that we shall have to suffer. We are almost down to the river, and it is not half so deep as you think. We are coming to the shore already, and methinks I hear, wafted from the other side, that sweetest song of them that cry ceaselessly, "Come, come." They are crying to you, and they are crying to me, "Come up hither, and wear the bridal robes at the marriage-supper of the Lamb." Every one of us must go sooner or later; by-and-by we shall all be there; and oh! the joy that is laid up for us who serve Christ!

You, dear friends, that have succored our poor wounded soldiers in prison, and who, some of you, have had stripes on your back because you would give them help, God has laid up mercies for you. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," says Christ. You have had tears, day and night, for your meat and drink; there is a land just before you where there are no tears. You that have borne Christ's cross, just

before you is Christ's throne, and you shall sit with Christ there.

Let us, then, stand in our place, be men, gird up our loins, trim our lamps, and be found ready to depart whenever Christ shall say to us "Come." And when at last we come together in heaven, oh! meet me, every one of you! Be there, every man and every child. Join me in the home above, that, taking hold of hands around the throne of God, we may unite in sending up a song of blessing, and honor, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!

PRAYER.

We rejoice, O God, that thou art drawing near and giving, in the heavens and in the earth, the tokens of the reviving year. Thou art commanding the storms, and they are breaking and passing. Thou art speaking, and the snow and ice are going back. The sound of the birds is in the air, and thou art bringing forth the signs of leaves, and every day milder heavens shall prophesy quicker growth. Thou art drawing near in the power of resurrection, and the spring is already dawning. O Lord, draw near to this sin-locked earth, where winter and night have brooded so long, where thy spring has been so hindered, and where men, as trees that are frozen fast in the ground, have been forbidden to blossom or to bring forth fruit. Thou Savior of men, is thy mission ended? and have we seen expended the force of all thine example, of thy wondrous power of doctrine, and of that ascension-power which thou dost wield as Prince and Head over all things, that time should at last begin to flow back and overwhelm with universal selfishness the work that is but inaugurated? For where are the races of men? What are all that know thy name compared with the countless millions that have never heard of thee? And what are the beginning virtues of the best of thy people compared with that great ignorance which yet wraps the world? Lord, hast thou walked upon this earth? Has it heard thy voice? Has it felt the beating of thine heart? Dost thou forget that thy work is not ended? Thou dost not. Then make haste, O God. Delay not thy coming; for the king-

dom of Satan is mighty, and it shakes the earth with the tread of armies, and with the weight of oppressing sceptres. Where, O Lord, art thou, that prisoners die and are not heard in their sighing? Where art thou, that the people are hindered from knowledge, and are trodden as grapes in the wine-press? Where art thou, that the poor are despoiled without a deliverer, and that all the earth conspires and frames iniquity by law, and seeks by nets and meshes the destruction of the poor and the needy? Thou art not asleep, O Jehovah; and because thou delayest thy coming thou shalt not forget to come suddenly; and with outstretched arm, and with the sword of vengeance in thine hand, thou wilt appear with disaster and utter destruction to thine adversaries. Thou wilt appear as the morning sun comes over the hills, and the glory of thy coming shall give hope to the poor and oppressed, and thy people shall hail thee as their deliverer. How long must we wait? How long must we labor? How long shall we walk in the watches of the night as they that wait and watch for the morning? O Lord our God, we implore thee. Wait not. Make haste. Let the days of thy delay be cut short, and let the wheels of thy chariot be heard coming swiftly through the air, bringing joy to this world that hath groaned and travailed in pain until now. We pray that thou wilt encourage thy people. Give them faith in thee as their deliverer. Give them faith in the truths of Christ Jesus. Give them a zeal and a heart to vindicate those truths, asserting them in the face of all contradictors. O Lord, we beseech of thee that the armies of those who contend by faith, and meekness, and love may be multiplied, and that, though full of love, they may be full of courage to face tyrants and tyrannies, and all the potency of men in authority. Grant, we beseech of thee, that, with thy mind, with Christ's mind, men may become valiant in all the earth. We beseech of thee that the condition of those who are growing up may be not more lax, but more zealous, more earnest, more full of the inspirations of heavenly courage. Forbid that any more should throw away their lives toward selfishness, and toward pride, and toward all the passions that have distracted this world. O that those who are now growing up might have the heavenly vision before them, and that they might have such an ideal of manhood as shall bring them far above their fathers, that when the affairs of this generation pass from their hands into those of their children, they may be more worthily administered, and advanced higher on the Christian plane than we have carried them. We are wander-

ing darkly through this earthly course, seeking, as we may, to sow the good seed; seeking to do such work as is fitted to our hand. But this world is not our abiding-place, and the foundations that we build are for others, and not for ourselves. We sow the seed, but other men shall enter into the harvest, even as we reap the seed sown by those who have gone before us. We walk by faith and not by sight. We are willing to labor, not expecting to see the fruit of our endeavors. We rejoice, O God, that thou wilt bring us ere long where we shall have rest and peace; where we shall know thee as we are known; where we shall behold thine outspread work, and all mysteries shall pass away, and all knowledge shall be revealed. Grant, then, that we may labor with our might while it is day. The night cometh when none of us can labor. May we desire nothing better than health and strength that we may work for Christ and the kingdom of the Savior in this world. And when we shall have finished our earthly career, be pleased to take us by the power of thy love into thine immediate presence, where we will praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit forever more. Amen.

II.

The Incarnation of Christ.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, October 23d, 1859.

The Incarnation.

"Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."—Heb., ii., 14–18.

This passage seems to me like part of a great and fruitful tree, which, stretching out over the garden wall into the highway, is covered with blossoms and fruit, reaching down so low that not only may men pluck for their need, but little children's hands can reach and take the bounty of God, which is a perpetual miracle; for the fruit, like the loaves, increases as you pick it, and grows by the very method of diminution. And yet it is but a branch. The whole tree is not seen. Beyond the sight are other boughs like this, clustering around the central strength of the firm trunk, and held down on every side, in vast sweep and munificence of fruit, for the universal want. It is the tree of life whose branch has thus shot forth. It stands in the garden of God. It bears twelve manner of fruits, and the leaves, even, are medicinal, for they are for the healing of nations.

It is but a cluster of leaves, a single fruit, that we can pluck to-day, and when our hour is exhausted, more a thousand times will remain than we shall have taken.

"Verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

He "took"—he did not *inherit* or *receive*—a body. It is

not the language that describes the ordinary birth of a common man. How strange it would sound if we were to speak of our children as if they had had a thought or volition respecting their nature, and as if they were pleased to take on them such and such a body when they were born! It is impossible not to see in this language that it marks an essential and prominent difference between Christ's entrance into this life and that of ordinary men. It describes voluntary action. It was an act contemplated beforehand. It implies not only pre-existence, but power, dignity, and condescension.

But the language clearly indicates a choice exercised by one raised higher than all merely created beings. "*He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.*" That is, he is more than man. He is more than an angel. He refused, when turning in his mind the course he should pursue, to take on him the nature of angels, but concluded, for a good and sufficient reason, to assume even a lower place, and to become a man. Is he less than God that is more than man and more than angel?

Partly arising from discussions, and partly from the remaining thorns and nettles with which sectarianism whips us, there is a great deal of unnecessary sensitiveness on the part of many persons at calling Christ God. It is a sensitiveness that is not reasonable. No man can analyze or synthesize the divine being. No man can put together the elements of being, and say, So much makes a man; so much more makes an angel; and now by so much more a God begins; and, at length, such and such elements make a full and complete divinity!

Have you an interior knowledge of what are the constituent elements of God? You are a man; therefore it is impossible for you to understand God fully.

We measure the nature of a being first by what *we* are. If he transcends our condition, we can measure him by what we know of angelic nature. If he transcends that, there is

no other way in which we can estimate him. We can go no higher. Neither are we able to judge of divine mentality, in such a way as to know the difference between divine and created minds.

All that remains, therefore, for us in estimating Christ's nature, is to judge by functional tests.

He is more than man, and more than angel. Now, is there any thing in his relations and in his doings that would indicate that he is very God? Did he create, and does he sustain the world in which we dwell? The first chapter of John's Gospel unequivocally declares that fact. It is also unequivocally declared in Hebrews.

Is he the Head of intelligences? He is the Head over all.

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Does he exhaust every finite conception of moral excellence? What conception have you that is not ten thousand times more illustrious in him than in your own wildest imagination it can be? Is he, lastly, the proper subject of love—engrossing and absorbing love—of obedience, and of worship? Particularly, is he the proper subject of WORSHIP? Let us see what Scripture says on this point. Turn to the fifth chapter of Revelation, and read from the sixth to the fourteenth verse:

"And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes,

which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." This was a symbolic vision. "And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."

That is the ascription of worthiness to take the book, whatever may be meant by that. It is, as it were, the solo—the recitative. And now the whole universe stands up for the chorus:

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said Amen. And the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever."

Now after the whole universal host, in a divine and heavenly enthusiasm, have laid such honors on the head of Christ, is there any thing in the heart of a man that you do not dare to give to him, lest God be displeased? Have you any thing so much more sacred than these ascriptions of love and reverence, gloriously thundered by the universal host of heaven, that you dare not go to Christ and offer it to him as wor-

ship? In view of such chanting and world-surrounding outcry and heavenly ecstasy, is there any thing which a human being can think, or feel, or do toward the throne, and to him that sits thereon, which is not right for him to do to Christ?

What use is there, then, for any uneasy questioning farther? and what fear need there be of letting forth all that the heart has in it, to Christ? For, with every enthusiasm fired, and with every power raised to a heavenly glory, it was not possible for the great company of the blessed, and the choral universe, to think, to feel, to say, or to do enough, and the offering of the redeemed to Christ was all that their nature had in it to give to any one. There was nothing higher, nothing deeper, nothing more comprehensive, nothing better in thought, or word, or feeling, than the ascriptions which were offered to the Lamb.

The practical result, then, of this exposition, is this: Christ is presented to us as the comprehensible form of God. He is God translated. To put him aside, and to attempt to raise up behind, and beyond, and above him, a shadowy ideal of a Spirit of God, Jehovah, and to worship that ideal, is, in effect, to neglect the easy manifestation of God for the difficult one—the possible one for the impossible. And the evil of this is not that the Father and Son are jealous of each other, so that, if you give to the Father what the Son claims, or to the Son what the Father claims, there will be ill feeling between them. Nor is it that there is a partition of offices, such that one of these persons of the Godhead will not do what is the other's function. The evil of not worshiping Christ will be upon ourselves. It is the difference between having before the mind the conception of a shadow and the conception of a comprehensible being. They that worship God as a mere spirit worship under the most difficult circumstances in which it is possible for the human mind to worship. It is the scriptural method to worship the Father through Christ; and they that worship Christ as very God

are enabled to worship under circumstances which make it very easy; for Christ is God present to us in such a way that our *senses*, our reason, and our affections are able to take a personal hold upon him. It is just the difference between a God afar off and a God near at hand; between a God that the heart can reach, and by its common sympathies understand and interpret, and a God which only the head and imagination can at all reach or descry—and even these only as astronomers' glasses descry nebulous worlds at so vast a distance that the highest powers can not resolve them, or make them less than mere luminous mist.

If, having a glorious manifestation of divinity that you can take hold upon with your feelings and sympathies, you reject it for one which touches but one part of you nature, and that the most uneducated, difficult, and unmanageable, it will do no special injury to the feelings of the confraternal Godhead, but it will injure you.

And this thought brings us back to the *branch* of which we were speaking—the method of incarnation. "*Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.*" It was the existence of a divine mind in a human body, subject to the laws and conditions of that body, which constituted the incarnation of Christ.

There have been derived from the mystic speculations and the legendary lore of the Romish Church impressions the most unwarrantable in Scripture in respect to the complex nature of Christ. The Bible teaches just this: that the *divine mind was pleased to take upon itself a human body.* We have no warrant in Scripture for attributing to Christ any other part of human nature than simply a body.

If, when I read that Christ wept, I am told that it was his human mind that sorrowed, there can be no moral power in it. That a man should weep is insignificant. But that it was God that wept—that he is of a disposition to do such things, that is indeed good news. This teaches of God what

no philosophy could have evoked, what I could have arrived at by no process of induction. I see into the thought, and feelings, and disposition of my God; for it was God in the human body that walked before me in Christ!

If the representations of the New Testament that Christ loved, longed for the personal presence of his disciples, was very patient with their rudeness, ran to their help with more love when they fell into sin than before, pitied and excused their infirmities; that Christ mourned over those whom he condemned, and sadly denounced Jerusalem, amid tears; that he loved birds, flowers, children; that he loved to sit at twilight under the olive-trees on the mountain over against Jerusalem, and commune with his followers of the day's experience; that he loved the solitude of the mountain, and prayed through the night; that he would gently steal upon the evening walk of two disciples to Emmaus, and talk like a stranger to those whom he entirely knew, and hesitate at the door in order to draw forth a more earnest welcome; if, in short, these ten thousand shades of thought, and feeling, and conduct, that give individuality and personality to Christ, also interpret the disposition of God, how near do they bring him to our tastes, our affections, our imaginations, and our reason! But if there is a second mind that did these things, and the divine mind is left out of sight, unrevealed by such natural, beautiful, engaging acts, we are left nearly as much in the dark upon the divine disposition as we were before. I love to carry every act of Christ right home to him as very God, and to say, This tells me how God feels, and what he is, for it is God himself!

But why was such a wonderful thing done? Why did Christ take the form of man? There are two roots from which our ideas of God spring, and the philosophies which arise from these two roots will lead in opposite directions, with opposite results.

One philosophy teaches that God is utterly above and unlike any thing which we know. It teaches us that some

things come nearer to representing him than others, but that there is nothing that really represents him in quality any more than in degree, and that when we have come the nearest to knowledge it is yet not knowing. Justice with us does not, according to this method of statement, reveal justice in God either in kind or scope. Love is not the same in creator and creature. Our highest moral sentiments point toward God, but not *at* him. This is, substantially, the view of one philosophy.

A man who, drawing the bow at a mark, comes within one hair's breadth of hitting it, and yet does not hit it, demonstrates the truth of the proverb, "A miss is as good as a mile." If he shoots toward the north, and fails to hit the mark, he might as well, in so far as hitting is concerned, have shot directly toward the south.

Suppose that I attempt to read an unknown language. I ask help for understanding it. They bring me a *Syriac* page, and say, "This is not like it, but it has some resemblance to it." Then how shall it help me? They bring me a *Hebrew* page, and say, "This is not really like it, but it is a little more like it than the Syriac." Then is brought a *Greek* book, of which it is said, "This, too, is not like it, but it is nearer like it than the Hebrew;" still I shall be unable to understand. If you will give me a quality that is the same in man and God, by imagination I can raise it, clarify it, and give it the proportions fit for divinity. But if the unit is false, no computation can do other than make the sum false.

Now to tell us that God is very much like such and such symbols, but yet is not like them, even in the respects compared, is to hold out to us a hope, and mock it at the same time. We need such a view of God that we can say, "I *know* whom I have believed."

There are two roots, I said, from which our ideas of God spring. One presents a conception of God derived from the material world. According to the analysis of material science, it places him at the head of a government whose regu-

larity and constancy are without break. It makes him a being who created all things, and sustains them by certain immutable, unvarying rules. This conception of God is one which is derived from the power of law, and based on the material globe.

Now such a conception must enforce, logically, a denial of flexibility in God by sympathy; a denial of any change of purpose in him; a denial of the incarnation, suffering, and death of Christ; a denial, therefore, of atonement, mediation, and succor by sympathetic love; and the conception of God derived from such a reasoning process as this—from such philosophical beginnings—must contradict our present ideas derived from the New Testament.

The ideas of God derived from nature assume two forms in the ancient and modern philosophic mind—the heathen philosopher, using his lower passions and appetites as the types of divinity, and modern philosophers using their mere reason for the same purpose, but both deriving their ideas from physical developments, or laws of nature. Such conceptions are dangerous both to the underbred and the overbred man. The conceptions of God formed by philosophers are as cold and dead as those formed by the heathen are brutish and debasing.

But there is, I repeat, another root from which we may deduce ideas of God's nature. We may take the human soul as the basis of those conceptions; not the material world, nor physical laws, but the human soul. The human soul represents nature in its highest development; laws of the human mind are natural laws, and transcendently higher in moral value than all others. We may clothe God with attributes which our nobler faculties faintly shadow forth. We may conceive him to have affections which to ours are what the sun is to a candle, both of which are fire, and have that point of agreement between them, although they differ infinitely in magnitude and power. We may think that he is a being in whom all the higher inflections of human feeling exist; in

whom there is the rise and subsidence, the coming and going of feeling, and the flexibility and play of heart, which we observe in human life. If, instead of looking upon God as the governor of the material universe, we take the human soul and its likeness to him as the basis of our ideas, there will spring up a government entirely different from that founded on physical laws—a personal and heart government—not a legal and official government; there will spring up from it a government formed on the pattern of the family, not a government formed on the pattern of the state.

It may seem as though there were intermediate sources from which men's conceptions of God spring, but what seem to be such are only mixtures of the two. In the employment of one we derive our conceptions of God from the material world; in the employment of the other we derive our conceptions of God from our similarity to him, and ascribe to him all the inflections of feeling which belong to our nature.

These are the only two sources from which men derive their ideas concerning the Divine Being; and from the latter there is a logical procedure, just as there is from the former. If, for instance, we believe that God has made us in his own image, so that from ourselves we might infer what he is, and if we believe that he moves in an infinite sphere according to the same feelings and laws which actuate us in a limited sphere, then, although he is lifted so far above us that we can not measure him, we may logically conclude that he is in sympathy with us, as we are in sympathy with our children; that he is in sympathy with the minutest wants of all his creatures on earth; that he exercises a particular providence over each of them; that it is consistent with his nature to be incarnated, and take on himself the conditions of men, and to live with them, and suffer for them, and die for them, and rise, ascend, and reign for them.

If your conceptions of God are derived from the great and heartless round of the natural world; if you worship a crystalline God, such as philosophy deduces from the material

globe, you can not conceive of his detracting from his dignity by coming down to *burrow*, as you call it, in this lower sphere. If you believe in a God whom mountains represent, a vast marble God, that sits as the central idol of the universe, it is contemptible to think of his bowing down and coming among men!

But if you have a conception of God fashioned from the elements revealed in the human soul; if you understand that greatness in the Divine Being does not mean muscular greatness, nor physical greatness, but purity, and depth, and scope of all the feelings of the heart, then you will understand that the greater God is, the more exquisite will be the things he will do in detail, the more possibility will there be of his descending and coming among men, and the more certainly will he be expected to be found among his family. As the mother is found where her child cries, and as the father is found where his son stumbles, so we should expect that if God is a being whom we may know from the analogies of our own nature, he would be found living where men are tempted, and where they sin, and suffer, and die.

This is the New Testament view of Christ. It springs naturally and inevitably from a God who is Father. It can not be grafted on any other view.

Here, then, are two distinct philosophical starting-points, both of which result in the construction of an idea of God; but the two are radically different, and they are oppugnant. If you begin with one, there can be no providence, no incarnation, no atonement, no forgiveness, no Savior, and you will be without the corroboration of the teachings of the New Testament. If you begin with the other, all these New Testament views will be perfectly natural, almost inevitable.

The conflicts of opinion in the religious world have arisen very largely from the fact that men have failed to recognize these different premises and their necessary results. Those men who take the material view are usually, at least they are often, consistent throughout in rejecting the peculiar New

Testament view. They have an idea of God which they have built up from conceptions formed upon the physical world; and for such a God there can be no ascriptions like those which are given to the Divine Being in the New Testament.

But our eminent theologians, to a great extent, have taken precisely the same premises, and also the facts of the New Testament, and undertaken to reconcile them. They are not reconcilable. The philosophy of the material world, or of natural science, makes God the grand scientific head of the universe, who governs the world by laws which are irreversible, clothes him with omnipotence, and makes it impossible for him to suffer, or to change his mind. Now, if you bring this view and that one set forth in the New Testament together, and compare them, you will see that if one is true the other is untrue. And of the countless troubles which have beset the subject of religion, not a few have been the result of an attempt on the part of theologians to reconcile the scientific view of God with the facts of the New Testament, which make him a being represented to us by the human soul.

I believe in the God of the New Testament, and in all the facts recorded therein concerning him. I believe him to be one who can smile, and weep, and joy, and suffer. I can not conceive of a God, that my heart would want, who could not share in my suffering and participate in my joy. I can not conceive how God can be a father, and not have a heart-care of his creatures. Can you be a father or a mother, and not have your feelings fluctuate with those of your children? If God has a heart of stone, he can hold the universe in his bosom and not suffer; but if he has a sympathetic and quick-feeling heart, the wants, and troubles, and weaknesses of mankind must touch his soul. The sympathies of God for man flow forth, not as tears flow from the eyes of mortals, but as the tides of the ocean sweep through the whole world.

This is the view I take. By experience and the anthro-

pomorphic teachings of the New Testament — and for the benefit of the Sunday-school, I will explain that anthropomorphism is the representation of Deity by means of the human form and with human affections—I have come to have a conception of a God mindful of every thing which concerns the welfare of his creatures. There are those who say that such a conception is unworthy of God; but I declare that any other conception is statuistic, and represents a God little better than the old stone Jupiters, whose distinguishing characteristics are hardness and immobility. Vines may grow around a stone, but the heart can not. If our souls are to take hold of God, we must believe in one who has feelings analogous to our own.

We see in the religious world all manner of inconsistencies, repeated attempts to settle questions that never remain settled, and unstable systems that are like sands which are worn and wasted by the fluctuations of the everlasting sea. Men are all the time attempting to reconcile the view of a suffering and sympathizing Savior with the view of an unfeeling and unchanging God, but they can not do it. These discordant elements can not be made to harmonize.

Which of these views does the New Testament take? Let us read again the passage we have selected for our text, with the context:

"For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one"—God and men are alike of one essential nature—"for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I, and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Why, then, did Christ come into the world, and take the form of man? Because men were his children, because he loved them, and because the way to take hold of them was to bring himself down into their condition, so that they should be able to see him and feel him, and thus, by the power of sympathy, God might have access to every human soul. That is the reason of the incarnation of Christ. He came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost; and since to find and save them it was necessary that he should manifest himself to their senses, he took on himself their form, and came among them, and lived as they lived.

A Moravian missionary once went to the West Indies to preach to the slaves. He found it impossible for him to carry out his design so long as he bore to them the relation of a mere missionary. They were driven into the field very early in the morning, and returned late at night with scarcely strength to roll themselves into their cabins, and in no condition to be profited by instruction. They were savage toward all of the race and rank of their masters. He determined to reach the slaves by becoming himself a slave. He was sold, that he might have the privilege of working by their side, and preaching to them as he worked with them. Do you suppose the master or the pastor could have touched the hearts of those miserable slaves as did that man who placed himself in their condition, and went among them, and lived as they lived, suffered as they suffered, toiled as they toiled, that he might carry the Gospel to them? This missionary was but following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on him the nature of men, and came among them, and lived as they lived, that he might save them from their sins.

Do any think that this view of God is degrading? If your God is Jupiter, it would be; but if he is the Father of the universe, it is ennobling and full of grandeur. The grandest deeds in this world are the loving condescensions of great natures to the help of weak ones. No crown so becomes a

king as the service of low and suffering natures by those that are high and happy!

The magnanimity of love, the patience of love, the endless gifts of all fruitful love, these are fitter to reveal the grandeur of God than thrones, and orbs, and the whole stellar universe! That he built the world, that he sustained it, this gives us a thought of God by the outside! That he suffered for it, that he gave his life for it, this shows us God within. Now we see the heart, and feel the disposition!

Some people are shocked to hear it said that *God* DIED. But what do you mean when you say that your babe died? Did it die as a candle dies when it is snuffed out? Did its soul go out, extinguished? Do you mean any thing more than that its body has died, while its spirit lives on? The body is the cage of the spirit, and when the spirit escapes from the body, men say that the man is dead, meaning merely that the cage is empty. And if it pleased Christ to take on him the form of man, and live with him, why could not he go out of the body just as men do? The separation of the soul and body of Christ was not different from the separation of the soul and body of a man. He died in the same way that all men die. No man, in speaking of the death of God, means that the spirit, the divine nature, suffered death. I rejoice to believe this truth. Christ was God, and he bowed his head and died. Men shrink from this thought because they are so gross, and judge by such low measures—because they do not derive their conceptions of God from their higher nature, but from the inferior elements and attributes.

There is nothing that can enter into the conception of man which is so sweet and glorious as the conduct and nature of God when viewed in the light of the higher ranges of human experience. I never bless God so much as when I think that he came into the world to search for me and save me; and this fact never comes to me as a living reality that I do not long to stand, with all the intelligences of the universe, and say, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the

seals thereof, and to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." I can worship such a One! A throne I can not worship, unless it be a throne on which a heart sits. A soul I can worship; a head I can not; a hand I can not; a sceptre I can not; but a heart I can. Before a Heart I can bow down, and feel that in bowing down I am forever and forever lifted up.

This, then, is the teaching of the New Testament in respect to the Lord Jesus Christ: God, looking in love upon his family on the earth, descended into the world, clothed his soul in the habiliments of the flesh, subjected it to the conditions of natural law, lived among men, loved them, taught them, suffered and died for them, was raised up out of death and the grave, went up on high, has received all power again, being restored to the glory which he had with God from the foundation of the world, and now lives to make intercession for us. That is my creed and belief in respect to the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. In view of this, I remark that, as it is by the *personal* power of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the hearts of his children that he works all goodness in them, so all attempts to live a religious life which leave out this living, personal, present sympathy of the Christ-heart with our human heart, will be relatively imperfect. Men's lives will be imperfect enough at any rate, but when they neglect this vital inspiration, it seems scarcely possible to live at all with religious comfort. Our religious joy never springs from the conception of what we are, but of what God is. No man's life, attainments, purposes, or virtues can yield him full peace. It is the conviction that we are loved of God, personally, by name and nature, with a full divine insight of our real weakness, wickedness, and inferiority, that brings peace. Nor will this become settled and immovable until men know and feel that God loves them from a nature in himself, from a divine tendency to love the poor and sinful, that he may rescue and heal them. God is called a sun. His heart, always warm,

brings summer to the most barren places. He is inexhaustible in goodness, and his patience is beyond all human conception. If he is our friend and lover, if he conducts our life from a fidelity that belongs to his nature, and not from reasons existing in us, then our trust will stand in the majesty and certainty of divine goodness, and not in unworthy moral conditions in ourselves.

It is not because God is indifferent to moral qualities that he loves sinners. His love is medicinal. His life is a world-nursing life. He cleanses whom he loves that he may love yet more. God's nature is infinitely healing and cleansing. They that are brought in contact with the divine heart feel it by the growth that instantly begins in them. And his being is so capacious that all the want of all sinful creatures, through endless ages, neither exhausts nor wearies him. Ten thousand armies might bathe in the ocean, and neither sully its purity nor exhaust its cleansing power. But the ocean is but a cup by the side of God's heart. Realms and orbs may bathe and rise into purity! No words will ever hint or dimly paint the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. It is love that pours, endless and spontaneous, just as sunlight does—simply because God is love! By the side of Christ a mother's love, that on earth shines high above all other, as a star above night-candles, is in comparison like those glimmering, expiring stars when the sun shines them into radiant eclipse! In the bosom of such a God there is salvation for every one that will trust him! And what chances of safety or purity are there for those who reject him? who light their own candle, and walk in its pale glimmer, rather than in the noonday glory of God in Christ?

All attempts to base a life of rectitude upon mere conscience—good and noble as conscience is in its applications to secular life; all attempts to become a Christian on the ground of duty to your convictions of right and wrong; all attempts to live in conformity to certain rules, lead to a state of bondage. No real liberty can be in Christian life

till Christ turns all *duty* into love. Conscience and law are sworn friends. But love makes performance of right so quick and spontaneous that law is always behindhand. Love *does* what law, lagging behind her glowing steps, tells sluggards and ingrates they *must* do. Indeed, love gives to law its enactments, and tells it what to proclaim, and love is the fulfilling of the law!

Christian experiences usually rise from the smallest beginnings. Great and glowing fires proceed from the merest spark. By the spark the match is set on fire. Soon the blaze of the match is so much more than the spark that the spark seems almost like nothing. But now the match is touched to the shavings, and the blaze which flashes up from them is so much larger than the blaze of the match that the match is thrown in the ashes. In a short time the kindling has taken fire, and it burns with so much more power than the shavings that their little blaze is lost in its greater fire. At length the wood sends up a brilliant flame, with which the blaze of the kindling wood bears no comparison. And by-and-by large coals fall down upon the hearth, and the whole fire-place glows, and the room is warmed and ruddily lighted.

And so, when men begin their Christian life, it is but a spark. Soon there is kindled in the soul some joy, which is no more than the blaze of a match. This is gradually developed into greater experience, and at length the whole being begins to burn and glow with a heavenly fire. Oftentimes men, looking back upon their Christian experience, and seeing how small it was, say, "I do not believe I was a Christian when I first believed myself converted."

Imagine a tree two hundred years old to look back upon the stages of growth through which it has passed, and to say, "I remember that when I was twenty years old I was only so big. I then thought I was an oak; but when I compare what I am now with what I was then, I see that I was not an oak at all!" What were you, then? a vine? a weed? not know that the seed-form and the full disclosed

form are the same in their nature? Do you not know that one is the legitimate result of the other? The beginnings of grace in the human soul may not reveal Christ to the extent that its latter stages do, but they are all parts of one work, and they all have the one purpose of giving man a sense of his infinite need—need by weakness, need by infirmity, deepest need by sinfulness! need of body, need of soul, need in his whole being!

But in a healthy, Christian development, with this sense of need comes the conviction that God is father, and that Jesus Christ is his manifestation, coming to earth to unwrap his divine soul, and throw it about poor, sinful men. As the mother takes the new-born babe, that can do nothing but cry, and folds it in her bosom, there to find its food, its warmth, its raiment, its every thing, so God takes needy souls that can only cry out, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," and wraps them up in the bosom of his love, there to find their food, their raiment, their all!

2. All those views of God which lead you to go to him for help and strength are presumptively true, and all those views of God which tend to repress and drive you away from him are presumptively false.

Any presentation of God as a spirit, which leads men to look upon him as a being vague and indefinite, of whom men can form no true conception, is a false presentation.

Any presentation of God as an official personage, who sits, as it is sometimes said, in the chair of state—as a mere governor of the universe—is a false presentation. God governs the universe, but he is not a mere governor. I may control men by my personal influence, but I am not captain. I am not elected to any thing. I do not act under any written law or constitution. So far as I control them, I do it by the play of my mind on theirs. I touch their interests, their sympathies, their enthusiasm. God governs the universe, not by his laws, so called, but by HIMSELF—by the direct throb of his soul. And, I repeat, any view of God which presents him

merely as an official personage, or in any way that leaves out *personality*, heart, sympathy, soul, is false!

Any ethical system which teaches that God is so pure that there is a vast void between him and the needy, sinful soul, and which has a tendency to make men fear to go to him on account of his great purity, is a false system. God's purity is one of his most glorious attributes, but it is sometimes represented by a way which slanders and misinterprets his nature. A right view of God is one which presents him as a being who draws us to him that we may be purified, just in the proportion that we are impure.

When a man is hungry, he looks to him who has the loaf. When a man is sick, he looks for him who has the medicine. When a man is perishing in the stream, and has struggled to the shore, and can not get out, he cries to him who has strength. The soul that is sinful goes to him who has purity, to be cleansed; and a view that presents any other God but one who says, "Behold, in me is your salvation," is a false view.

Any view which presents God as a being whose justice shall make sinners who wish to return to him unable to do so, is a false view. Public sentiment and public law are like ramparts around a city. As long as a man is inside of the ramparts, they defend him; but the moment he is outside of them, they treat him as an enemy, and he can not get back, but is exposed to the sweep of artillery. You might as well attempt to climb up the steep sides of Mount Sinai as up the human heart when it has set itself to punish those who have done wrong. Public sentiment and law may save a man before he has done wrong, but they damn him after he has done wrong. But not so with God. The way to him is down hill. Up hill is down hill if it be toward God! If we are in danger, in him is safety. If we have done wrong, in him is the remedy. He is the sun that shows us, when we are in darkness, where to go; he is the bright and morning-star that makes our dawn and twilight come *to* us; he is our

way; he is our staff; he is our shepherd; he is our sceptred king to defend us from our adversaries; he is all in all to all!

3. Those states of mind, then, in us, which bring us nearest to God, and which bring us to him most confidingly, are such as honor him most and please him most. There are a great many who wish they could please God, and would give any thing if they could only be *prepared* to please him. Most will you please him when you confide in him!

When a man who is addicted to drunkenness rings at my door, and comes in, and says to me, "For God's sake, if there is any feeling in your heart for a poor creature, will you not pity me and help to save me?" it is not merely pity that fills my soul, but I ask myself, "Why did that man come to me?"

Only a short time ago, as one of the brethren before me will recollect, two men being seized with a desire to reform their lives, came over from the lower part of Broadway, where they worked, and hunted about until they found me, and asked me to administer the pledge to them. It did not do them so much good as it did me. It was an unsurpassed compliment, that when they wanted to do better, my name came up before them, and they said of me, "He is the man who will sympathize with us and help us." And if I had said to them, "You have violated natural law and your own education; go away and purify yourselves, and when you have become decent and respectable men, report yourselves to me, and I will then tell you what I will do," would I not have done worse than they, with all their vileness and wickedness?

Now, when you wish to please God, treat him as one who feels sorry for sinners; treat him as one who longs to help those that need help; go to him confidingly. No matter how bad you are—the worse the better. Old Martin Luther said, "I bless God for my sins." He would never have had such a sense of the pardoning mercy of God if he had not himself been sinful. By as much as you are wicked, God is

glorious in restoring you to purity. Let him do for you those things which are the most generous and magnanimous, and that will please him best. He is a being whose feelings and affections move on such vast lines of latitude and longitude, that the more you presume upon his goodness and cast yourself before him, saying, "I need a miracle of grace and mercy," the better he is pleased.

Now I beseech you to kindle up a thought of what your mother would do if you were a sinful, heart-broken, discouraged man, but repentant, saying, "I have trod the thorny way of life, and learned its mischief; can you, mother, help me to begin anew?" What mother would cast away such a son? What father would not receive a son on such terms? And if earthly parents can lift themselves up into feelings of holy sympathy for a repentant child, what must be the feelings of God when his children come to him for help to break away from sin, and to lead lives of rectitude! Read the fifteenth chapter of Luke, and find out what God's feelings are; and then say, "I will arise and go to my Father."

III.

Visions.

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Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, January 15th, 1866.

Visions.

"Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."—Acts, xxvi., 19.

While Paul was on his way to Damascus, on an errand of persecution, honest, but wicked, he was arrested by a miraculous vision. A sudden light, down-shining, filled the air, surrounded him and his company, and by its impact drove them to the ground. Then came those solemn words of warning and of calling. The apostle, in his speech to Agrippa, declares that he was not disobedient to that calling through this wonderful vision.

Paul's original nature had three dominant faculties—pride, conscience, love; and they stood in that order, pride giving the key-note, conscience supplying the motive power, and love, where it was in consistence with these, accompanying them. After he became a subject of renewing grace, these were still the three dominant faculties, but they stood exactly in the reverse order—love first, conscience next, and pride last. By *pride* I do not mean the offensive kind of pride, but self-esteem—that sense of one's own personality which God gives as the inspiration of dignity and character.

He also had a peculiarly excitable temperament, such as was likely, in remarkable circumstances, to project his emotions, and to give them to him, as it were, in the form of outward truths—for there are those whose minds are sensitive, and are so organized that their own internal feelings become objective or outward. What they feel, they think they see;

and what their mind says to them inside silently, they fancy that they hear said to them by some voice outwardly.

I do not mean that there are never times when voices sound that *are* voices; I do not mean that there are not divine influences that come to us from without; what I mean is, that there are cases in which men think that they hear sounds, but do not hear any except those that are produced within themselves; and that there are men who know that they see visions, but who behold nothing, the state of their mind being such that, under given circumstances, things come to them seemingly from without, although really they are from within.

Now the constitution which is favorable to this peculiarity of experience belongs eminently to our moral nature. The power of excitability, and, if you please, super-excitability, in such a degree as, particularly in connection with the reason and the moral sense, shall make things that are invisible visible to us, is one of the most important and one of the most wonderful of the constituent elements of the human mind. It may be classed among those things that are evidences that the mind shall yet redeem itself from its materiality, and shall rise above matters of sense, and live in a purely spiritual condition.

God selects for his instruments those who are already constituted in harmony with the line of work to be performed. David was a poet born; and he was selected to be the sweet singer of Israel, because his duty would be in harmony with the constituent elements of his mind. Moses was essentially of the nature of a statesman—comprehensive, just, wise, and he had that most rare quality that belongs to the statesman, the power to balance the sense of absolute right and justice with a sympathy for the relatively imperfect conditions of human life. Therefore he was chosen to be a law-giver. Isaiah was the prophet, because he was so entirely adapted to the work of a prophet by his birth-gifts. Paul was elect, from birth, by his fitness for the apostolic work.

This is not denying a divine inspiration, but simply affirming that, in the selection of those who shall be prepared for great works, God is pleased to select those who are already adapted by nature to such uses—to legislation, those who by nature are wise; to poetry, those who are naturally poets; to eloquence, those who are gifted with fluent speech; to activity and practical labor, those who are adapted to manage affairs.

What, then, is the difference between things known to be true by the natural operation of the mind, and things known to be true by supernatural influence? In the quality of the things known there is no difference. Where a thing is known to be true, it is no more true because God said it than because a man said it. Truth is truth, whoever says it. But it makes a great difference in the process of ascertaining the truth whether I receive it as accredited by the testimony of man, or as accredited by the testimony of God.

We have a familiar instance of the difference between a thing that is authoritative and one that is not. A private, in the midst of battle, says to the men of his regiment, "Look to that charge upon our flank: we ought to change front." Not a man in the ranks stirs. This private is right, but a private has no authority to speak. But a brigadier general passing, and hearing the remark, and seeing the state of affairs, gives orders in exact accordance with it, and instantly he is obeyed. The truth is the same in the mouth of the private and in the mouth of the general; but one speaks by authority, and the other does not.

Now prophets and apostles spoke by authority; and when spoken, the truths they uttered had a claim upon the world which they would not have had if they had been spoken by persons that were not authenticated. They would have been as true in the one case as in the other, but they would not have had the same effect. Divinely attested truth is more powerful than truth that stands merely upon its own merits.

Paul was not alone subject to this facility of vision, al-

though he was subject to it in a greater degree than any of the other apostles. You will recollect Peter's vision of the sheet, and his vision of the angel that came to the prison and led him forth. You will recollect John's Apocalyptic vision—the most remarkable one of which there is any account in the inspired record. And Paul, on more than one occasion, saw visions. Indeed, he was accustomed to them. He was the most practical, he had most eminently of all the quality of common sense, he was the most logical of all the apostles, and the least likely of any of them, apparently, to have been a man subject to visions; and yet, more than any of them, or all of them together, he seems to have been subject to these mental exaltations. You will recollect how, in a vision, he saw the men of Macedonia, and heard them say "Come over and help us." You will recollect his brief—too brief record of certain transcendent experiences, in which he seemed to himself to be lifted into paradise, and heard things which it was impossible to utter. "Not lawful to utter" it is in our version, but *impossible to utter* is a better rendering. And then there was the vision that he saw while going to Damascus.

You may say, "Can it be safe for a man, in so momentous a matter as religion, to follow his own eccentricities of experience, and to place reliance upon these visionary states of mind? Is it right for the world to be dependent for its fundamental ideas of truth and rectitude upon the visions of super-excited minds? Is not this very capacity to see visions an element of fanaticism? And if seeing visions is a thing to be desired, is not the lunatic asylum to be prized as the very home of inspiration? For do they not see more visions, and dream more dreams, there than any where else?"

I reply that a mere vision was never more than a suggestion to the apostles and the prophets. It never was authoritative. It was only a picture presented to them. The visions of the apostles furnished new materials for their judgments, but never superseded their judgments. They furnished new materials for their moral sense, but never superseded

their moral sense. They were pictures held out to their minds for the sake of awakening thought, and imagination, and conscience; but their conduct depended upon their subsequent conclusions founded on what they saw.

Let us review some instances.

You will recollect the case of Peter, how, after he prayed, there was a vision of a sheet let down for him, and how, not understanding it, he refused to "kill and eat," because he was not accustomed to partake of animals that were pronounced unclean by the customs of the Jews. You will recollect the whole story of the vision—how he followed the messengers sent to him by Cornelius; how he went down to see him; how he conformed to the requirements of the circumstances; how he came back and related all the particulars to his brethren; and how, after many days and much thinking, he at last accepted the truth, which was so simple that we smile to think that it required a heavenly vision and a progressive disciple to bring about an understanding of it, namely, that Christ might be preached to the Gentiles! But the men that have needed four years of bloodshed to teach them that a negro is a child of God, do not need to be told how hard it is, in the face of prejudice, to learn the simplest truths! You have just begun to look upon the negro as an immortal being, and as having rights that you are bound to respect. The cases are analogous. It required a miraculous dispensation to teach the Jew—who was a Saxon all over—that the Gentiles—who were in the relation of negroes to their prejudices—had their rights, among which was the right of having the truth of God preached to them. But when this vision came to Peter he did not accept it at once. He did not understand it in the beginning. He thought about it, and reasoned about it, and prayed about it, and went on his journey watching the indications of Providence, and at last he saw the truth, and acquiesced in it. The vision, then, was not a thing that he received without subjecting it to the test of reason, and common sense, and conscience.

Take the instance of Paul's conversion, with which we are concerned this morning. If you were to read only the account that is given in the 26th chapter of Acts, you would perhaps suppose that, immediately after the heavenly vision fell upon him, he commenced a course of obedience to it; but if you turn to the 9th chapter of Acts you will see that there was a long period between the hour that he was cast down and the time that he entered upon his Christian course. He lay for three days, after he was brought into Damascus, as it were stunned.

"They led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

He was as dead.

"And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision"—for one vision was made to throw light upon another, it seems—"Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street that is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth."

Some do not believe that there is such a thing as the direct communication of God with the soul: what will they make of that?

"For behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight."

There Paul had a wonderful vision which we should have known nothing about if it had not been for this incidental revelation of it.

"Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles and kings, and the children of

Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and, putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus."

Now all this shows that, after this miraculous vision, Paul did not spring to his feet and instantly commence preaching, as if inspired with a blind enthusiasm. At first he was in a condition of bewilderment; then he was under the instruction of Ananias; then he was in a state that allowed the law of thought and the law of moral feeling to work; and at length he knew how to act upon the convictions of duty which had been wrought in him.

The vision, then, was but an extraordinary divine method of impressing his mind with truths which should have influenced him from natural causes, but which, for various reasons, failed to do so.

It appears, therefore, that the apostles acted not upon visions and dreams, but upon certain truths which these visions brought to light. These extraordinary sights stimulated the mind to the proper use of its natural faculties, and the results in conduct flowed therefrom. All the truths that were reported by vision or by dream to the mind were subjected to the reason and to the moral sense, and became the basis of conduct.

It is this that distinguishes between fanaticism and rational inspiration. The one is an unreasoning impulse; the other is an impulse inspiring the individual to a higher degree of moral feeling, and to an intenser intellectual activity. Fanaticism does not reason; it only feels. Divine visions cause

men to reason more actively—not less. Fanaticism obscures the understanding. Divine visions make it brighter and clearer. Fanaticism subjects a man purely and merely to his own internal impulses. Divine visions employ a man's internal impulses to make him more conscious of the truths of nature, of history, and of God's moral government.

The questions are very natural at this point, Are visions ended? Were they peculiar to the opening of Christianity? Let us look a little more into that constitution out of which visions spring. What is that nature of the mind which gives rise to them?

Many of you are commercial men. Your affairs are entangled. There is some business transaction that is involved, and you do not see how to disentangle it. You talk with A and B, but no light is thrown upon it. It is confused, and troublesome, and irritating, and so it remains for days and perhaps weeks. At last there is an hour in which—you can not tell why—like a flash the whole thing opens on the mind, and you see exactly how it lies, and how to take hold of it; and you say, "I never had a thing come to me more clearly in all my life."

You will ask me, "Is that a vision?" That depends upon what you mean by a vision. It is nothing more than is natural to the human faculties. For there are three states in which an emotion may exist: First, there is a state so low that only under the force of external excitement is the faculty able to act. Secondly, there is an intermediate state, in which the faculty is able, in a limited degree, to produce its own activity. Thirdly, there is a state in which an emotion is luminous, and automatically throws itself forward into the understanding, and sees things almost as if they were visible and objective. This higher action of the faculties is what I understand to be the condition essential to the seeing of visions. Some men are organized so as to be but little susceptible to these states of vision; others are more delicately organized. Some can rise easily into a state of *exaltation*,

when the mind seems to flash upon and irradiate whatever subject it considers. Of those that can do it, some can do it more easily than others, and some who are fortunately endowed can do it without difficulty. Where men are in a state in which their faculties are highly susceptible, they are in a state which is favorable to the seeing of visions.

Now if the question is, Are there *now*, in our age, authoritative visions superinduced upon the faculties of the mind? I answer, No, there are no authoritative ones. There is no pope, no bishop, no priest, no prophet, put in authority. There is no voice from the Temple that men are bound implicitly to obey. God, in these latter days, having raised up, by centuries of instruction, those materials from which men can form just judgments, lays upon them the responsibility of forming those judgments, and no longer sends authenticated prophets and priests divinely commissioned to speak to men as with the voice of God. That which was necessary for the infantile condition of the race is no longer necessary, and has passed away.

But the constituent element of mind on which were based authenticated visions has not ceased. We have visions still, and visions meant for the same purpose that visions were in former times, only we are not authorized to say, "This vision is given me for the sake of the nation." If you have a vision, it is for your own guidance; and it must be authenticated in your case, as the apostle's visions were authenticated; you must subject it to the test of reason and the moral sense. If you find that the view presented is true, not simply because the vision presented it, but on its own evidence, then the vision is to you as trustworthy an inspiration as the apostle's visions were to him. It is your personal property; it is not official property. As men grow wiser and wiser, official visions will be fewer and fewer, and personal visions will be more and more frequent. With the advance of intelligence, visions become the right of individuals, and not the right of representative persons, who stand in an official relation to the race.

Visions, then, are not ended. The biographies of eminent Christians are full of testimonials of hours of luminousness. Wherever a man rises to that state in which he seems for a moment to have passed from under the influence of physical things, and to have come under the influence of great eternal realities, he is in a condition substantially like that which the prophets were in when they had their visions. But his visions are not authoritative except to himself; and they are not authoritative to him until he has done as Paul, and Peter, and John, and Isaiah, and David did, namely, until he has taken the substance of what seems to be the revelation, if it be a revelation, or the impression, if it be an impression, and subjected it to the power of reason and conscience. If by that test he finds the vision to be true, it is thereafter to be a spur and a stimulus to him in following the truth.

What, then, is Christian duty in respect to these vision-hours?

But I shall be asked whether such intense excitement, only occasionally felt, is as useful as would be an even and moderate rationality? Would it not be a great deal better if men should always live in such a state as not to need special experiences of this kind?

Would it not be better if men were different from what they are? Would it not be better if they did not have to sleep? I do not know, nor am I interested to reason on that subject. I know that periodicity is a law of man's nature. It is not exceptional. It is normal. And I know that, although moral luminousness may be augmented, and although some forms of it may abide with us, so that we may be children of light, yet, even under those circumstances, there will be some experiences that are higher than others. And it is folly to say "Why not live independent of the special hours?" Why not depend upon both these and ordinary hours? Why not make the common experience as perfect as you can, taking this as the substratum of normal activity; and then, if God gives you besides intense views opening the heaven, and pour-

ing down light that augments your sensibility, and widens your range of thought, and increases your sense of truth, take that too? They are not antagonistic. They are co-ordinate.

Because a tree bears on an average ten bushels of apples a year, ought the farmer to object that now and then there is an unusually fruitful year in which it bears twenty-five bushels? Because certain flowers ordinarily are single, ought a man to object that sometimes those flowers are double? Because clover generally comes with three leaves, ought a man to object that sometimes it comes with four or five leaves? And because the results of thought and experience are the ordinary concomitants of life, ought men to object that once in a while it pleases God to give them a sensibility by which things are looked at in a higher light than they are wont to be?

There are special reasons why we should have, so far as it is in our power to procure them, these hours of vision.

We should have them, first, because the natural course of life tends to routine, and because the natural tendency of routine is to dullness. What grows in a road? Dust, and nothing but dust. Grass does not grow there; flowers do not grow there; harvests do not grow there. Where there is the constant tramping of feet, and the incessant rolling of wheels, there is dust and dullness. And as it is in a highway of travel, so it is in the highway of thought and duty. The constant repetition of any line of thought or feeling produces dullness. That is the objection to ritualistic services, and it is an objection that can not be overcome. They are sometimes useful, and perhaps necessary; but the great objection to them is that by constant repetition men lose the power of vivid appreciation. And it is true that all of human life tends to dullness.

These hours of exaltation and luminousness are needed to resist moral stupor and to compensate dullness.

Men insensibly affect each other, and go up or down in

common. A sort of average conduct is tacitly agreed upon, and men are content if they do not fall below it. They are satisfied to be about as truthful, about as virtuous, and about as morally active as men ordinarily are, and the standard of society becomes the standard of each individual. When a man who has large endowments conforms his life to that of the average of men, he demeans and belittles himself. When a man that has power of genius above his fellows seeks only to go about as high as men in general, it is as if an eagle should take pattern from sparrows and doves. God gave the eagle wings that they might fan the greatest heights, and spread themselves nearer the sun than those of any other bird. For the eagle to play sparrow or dove is mean enough. And for men that are capable of large thought, of noble enthusiasm, and of soaring high in the realm of imagination, to reduce themselves to the average condition of those by whom they are surrounded, is pitiable. Yet that is the tendency. Every body is thinking, "So that I keep step with my regiment in social matters, so that I do not fall below the average line of character and conduct in society, I shall do well enough."

Then, the natural effect of care, of business, of hardness of heart, of continual strife with the world, is to literalize men, to minify them, and to lower them. The usages of life and the infirmities of human nature cause men to gravitate. It is a piteous thing to see men indurated. The process is sad. The indications, as they come out here and there, are symptoms, as it were, that mark the coming death of something noble in men. If the flood is allowed to sweep on without obstruction, if the maelstrom is allowed to carry down unresisted all that comes within its reach, fearful indeed must be the consequences.

Since men are in a world where the whole course of things tends to secularize and degrade whatever is angelic in them, how blessed a thing it is that there is in the human constitution that out of which spring these heavenly visions! Espe-

cially in the case of men whose minds all the week long have been occupied with physical things, how blessed it is that they should have times, as of a Sunday morning, when they go back in imagination to the period of childhood, from the purity of which they have sadly departed! It is as if they were standing before a picture. A picture? No, a panorama. A panorama? No, a vision. They call to mind the sweet, impatient hours of yearning. They remember how dear to them were father and mother, and brother and sister. They recollect how beautifully all things blossomed in anticipation. For a great hirsute, rough man, that has killed conscience, and trampled down taste, and perverted all the best instincts of the soul, to be caught up in a vision, and carried back to his childhood, and made to see his whole past life, and constrained to ask himself, as he looks at his early innocence and his present demoralized condition, "Was I that? and am I this?" it is like the voice of God in judgment. And these vision-hours, whichever way they come—and they come in almost every conceivable way—sometimes through the intellect; sometimes through the affections; sometimes through the moral sentiments; sometimes through imagination; sometimes through the gush of sounds and music; sometimes through the inspiration of pictures, and sometimes through natural scenery—how we need them: we that are made sordid by care; we that are weighed down and made beasts of burden so often; we who, though the sons of God, are so often led captive of the devil!

The depressions of life require some such stimulus and inspiration. These vision-hours are natural antagonisms of whatever tends to depress the vital power of hope and faith. Many forms of sickness make the heavens as sackcloth, and beat the earth fine as dust. Disappointments tend to sour us, to imbitter us, and, above all things, to break the staff of hope. A man that has lost moral sense is like a man in battle with both of his legs shot off: he has nothing to stand on. A man that has lost faith is like

a man in battle with both his arms severed from his body: he has nothing to work with. A man that has lost hope is like a man in battle, both of whose eyes have been shot out: he can not see. A man that has neither moral sense, nor faith, nor hope, is not a man: he is dead. And in the struggle of life we sometimes have nothing to stand on; nothing to reach out with; nothing to look forward with. But if there are certain hours for such vision states as I have described; if God inspires the constituent elements of our minds now and then with celestial visions, that we may have higher views, loftier ideas, nobler impulses, how blessed a provision it is!

We need, then, something that shall flame up above the embers, and blaze in the chimney of human life; we need vital and startling impressions on the better side of our nature, that the predominance which physical realities tend to gain over us may be overcome.

Men are like rivers in winter. Go and look at the Connecticut River to-day. It is frozen over. There is a flood of water to be sure, but it is far down beneath the covering that hides it; and every hour, as winter goes on, it is radiating more and more of its heat; and the crust grows thicker and thicker, though already it is so thick that business has taken possession of it, and swiftly darts to and fro upon it. The river is under the dominion of ice, and can not free itself therefrom. The sun shines upon the superincumbent mass, and it grows porous; yet so thick is it that the sun does not melt it. But by-and-by, afar off, the rains begin to descend; for it is March. God's southern winds come beating against the northern cold; the clouds are condensed; they turn to showers; they fall upon the hills or upon the mountains; and these all sweep down their treasures to the valley; and they are borne along and emptied into the channel of the river; and the ice, strongly buoyed, is lifted up and fractured into vast sheets; and the freshet takes them, and, like a mighty mill, grinds them to atoms as it rushes along.

And now, in this glorious and blessed resurrection, see how the water begins to rise, and send to the bottom that which has been its oppressor, till at last, after one, or two, or three days of such terrific conflict, though there may be on its banks some remains of the ice, you will see the emancipated and disenchanted stream flowing gayly on without crust or barrier.

It is just so with men's souls. We need these freshets, these glorious overflowings of the channels of the soul, to cleanse away wintry obstructions, to break up the habits, to clear us out, that the soul may be as the river of life, and that God's face may be reflected in the clear surface thereof.

Men, then, should mark the occasions of these visions, in order that they may seek them. They come, sometimes, without our knowing what brings them. There is always a cause, but we are not always conscious of it. I have had some Sabbath mornings that rose upon me with healing in their wings, after a troubled week. I can scarcely tell why I was troubled, but the mind's fruit was not sweet. Yet, when the Sabbath morning came, I no sooner looked down upon the bay, and across at my morning signal—the star on Trinity Church, symbolic of the star that hung over the spot where the child Jesus lay—than I felt that it was an elect morning. And when I went into the street, all the trees—if it was summer—were murmuring to me; all the birds were singing to me; the clouds were bearing messages to me; every thing was kindred to me. All my soul rejoiced, I do not know why. I had met with no unusual good fortune. I had been moody all the week, perhaps. My heart had said, "I will not pray." I was unprepared for any such experience, so far as my own volition was concerned; but undoubtedly there was some cause operating which was in consonance with the laws of the mind; and when the morning came, with its propitious conjunction of circumstances, these results took place. We do not understand the reason of these hours; and when they come without volition or preparation

on our part, they seem more like a sheet let down from heaven than like natural phenomena. I like to think that they are divine inspirations. My reason tells me that they are not, but I like to think that they are. Such poetic illusions help to make truth higher and better.

These days of spiritual vision are so many days taken out of the calendar. They are intercalated upon our dark and frigid days. They come in the midst of great sorrows, often —sorrows which stimulate rather than torpify the mind. There are some troubles that beat us down, and there are some troubles that afford a stimulus to the whole mind, and lift it up to a higher plane.

Have you not, in the great hours of sorrow—not in the despairing hours of sorrow; not in the degrading hours of sorrow; not in the sordid hours in which sorrow drags you in its own slime; but in those hours in which you feel that you are a son of God under affliction, that this world is not your abiding-place, and that your home is the eternity of God—have you never, in those hours, felt that the world to come was opened as it had never been before, and that God's glory shone as it had never shone before? Have you never, in those hours, felt that those doubts and skepticisms which had pestered your mind had been swept away?

In the sultry insect-breeding days of summer, how insects abound! Every tree is a harbor for stinging pests. Wherever you sit, they swarm around and annoy you, and destroy your peace and comfort. By-and-by there come those vast floods of clouds that bring tornadoes, and that are thunder-voiced; and up through the valleys, and over the hills and mountains, sweep drenching and cleansing rains. And when the storm has ceased, and the clouds are gone, and you sit under the dripping tree, not a fly, not a gnat, not a pestilent insect is to be seen. The winds and rains have driven them all away.

Has it never been so with those ten thousand little pests of pride, and vanity, and envying, and jealousy, and unlawful

desire, that for days have teased and fretted you, and kept you busy with conscience, and taste, and affection, and all the higher faculties, until God sent upon you some great searching sorrow, some overwhelming trouble? There was that babe, that lived in your heart; and God laid heart and babe together in the grave! He subverted your household. He brought on you such torrents of suffering that it seemed as though the foundations of the great deep were broken up. And in those hours he graciously sustained you, and lifted you up toward himself, so that, although you suffered unutterable affliction, you felt that it had cleansed you from jealousies, envies, vanity, pride, the whole swarm of venomous and stinging insects that had beset you. It is a blessed thing to have such hours of vision, and such fruits of them.

Oh! what inexpressible longings do some bad men have for things that are high, and noble, and true! Men that are addicted to wicked courses sometimes mourn more than others can conceive. And when, in times of sickness or deep distress, there come to wrong-doers these better hours, they are filled with sorrow for the past and aspirations for the future, and they pray that the vision may abide. Yea, like the disciples on the top of the mountain, they say, "Let us make three tabernacles here, where we may always see Christ glorified, and not be obliged to follow him as a man of sorrows." But it can not be; and, since it can not be, blessed be these special hours of vision.

They come to us, also, in times of superlative joy; not such joy as simply gratifies, and, as it were, saturates. Some joys are like sugar where there is just enough to flavor that into which you put it without revealing itself; and some joys are like sugar where there is so much that the flavor of the dish is lost, and only the sweet is tasted. Now these joys that simply gratify, these joys that saturate, are sickening and are bad. They draw us down. But joys that raise the flavor of every thing into which they go make you clearer-thought-ed, and refine your intellectual perceptions, your imagina-

tions, your tastes, your fancies, and your longings. These are the right kind of joys. Such joys bring visions frequently—not always, but frequently; and some bring them more frequently than others.

Then, too, that state of mind into which we come when we are powerfully under the influence of other minds is frequently a state in which visions come to us as from above. Often, when a truth has been presented to you by the voice of the preacher; when another, by the action of his mind on your mind, has kindled you into sympathy with him, God takes occasion to bring before you a vision of the great realm of the invisible.

I need not mention any more of the occasions of visions. You see how various they are. Whatever tends to stimulate the moral nature, and bring men into higher conditions than belong to their ordinary experience, is a preparation for this power of seeing invisible things as really and clearly as if they were visible—this power of taking hold of higher truths with as firm a grasp as that with which we take hold of truths that represent themselves to the senses.

What, then, are the uses of these hours of vision?

First, they are courts in which to adjudicate doubtful questions, and sophistries, and falsenesses. A man's mind is a court, and his passions are all of them tricky lawyers. In ordinary times, you can not go into any court, and hear the *ex parte* statements of the counsel, without feeling that there is a great deal of ingenuity exerted to cover up some things, and unduly magnify others, so as to make out the best possible case for the side whose interests it is the desire of the special pleaders to advance. But there sits the judge, and he puts the lawyer right on this side, and he puts the lawyer right on that side, and holds every thing to the law and to the fact, that he may secure justice.

Now we have a judge in us. There are many men whose conscience has been bribed; and when they are in court they are all the while excusing themselves for giving their adher-

ence to things that are wrong. They say, "I know that such and such a thing is true, but—" Ah! when a man says "I know that that is true, but—" his conscience is bribed. When a man says "I know that that is right, but—" the old chief justice in his soul has a bribe. The passions and the appetites have the ear of the judge. Pride, and selfishness, and envy, and lust have bribed the judge.

And how is it with you? Is there a day in which the chief justice in your soul is not bribed to sit and hear the pleadings of the lower faculties, and to pronounce decisions at variance with justice? On the whole, is it not the case that more often than otherwise he issues a verdict in favor of the wrong, and that you go out of court exultant because you have triumphed over the right? You have departed from the standard of rectitude, you are guilty of some misdemeanor, and you are arraigned before the judge that sits in every man to pass upon his conduct; but the judge is drugged, the whole court is drunk, and you are allowed to go without punishment or rebuke. This happens not once, nor twice, nor thrice, but scores of times in the experience of men. We need to have courts where righteous judgments are declared. Men need such visions of God Almighty's judgment-day that they shall hold their breath, that their conscience shall not dare to accept a bribe, and that they shall look at every thing in the light of God's law.

There are men who, when these occasional hours of vision come to them, tremblingly say, "All my life is a lie;" and they try to banish it from sight. Ah! what power there is in such hours as these, when they penetrate the soul, and compel the judge that sits there to adjudicate justly on questions of right and wrong, make him drop his accursed gains by which he has been bribed, and cause him to say, "Pride is wicked; envy is wicked; lust is wicked; dishonesty is wicked; thou oughtest to do the things that are right, and nobly right." Do not such hours do you good? If they do not, woe be to you! A man that, having gone through such hours, does

not make a profitable use of them, is a reprobate. He is sold under sin, he is bound over as a galley-slave to sin, and is on his way to the righteous retribution of God, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath!

I beseech of you, do not dare to sully these hours. Do not tread them under foot, and denounce them as outbursts of the imagination. Will you not let God help you by means of the imagination? Will you not let God send you any thing that in his wisdom he sees fit, to help you in this struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil?

These are hours, too, in which to fashion the general drift of plans and course of life. In early days in Indiana, where I once lived, the forests were so thick that a man might travel days and never see the sun. An old neighbor of mine told me that, when he first settled in Indianapolis, he used to go to the White River, where the trees were parted, to get a sight of the sky. There are dense forests there still; and travelers in the thickly-wooded sections often go to the nearest broken and hilly region—some Alleghanian height—and look for a spot where the lightning or tornadoes have played axeman with the trees, and opened a window through which they can look out upon the surrounding country, and ascertain where they are, and whether they are going in the right direction.

Now God raises up before us mountain-tops lifted high into the air above all obstructions, from which we may obtain a view round the whole horizon. And these are the times in which you should lay the course on which you mean to travel.

These hours of vision also prepare us to return to life with reductions or magnifications of our estimates of joy and sorrow, good and evil. We are all the time acting under the influence of false estimates in the processes of life. We estimate some things a great deal too highly, and put altogether too low an estimate on other things.

Men that live by weighing small quantities of articles of

diet need to have their weights and measures occasionally tested. The dust gets on the scales which the grocer uses for weighing out his pounds and ounces, and affects them, so that, although he is honest, the weight is short; and the weights lose something and get light by usage; and it is very necessary, in doing business, that you should keep your weights and scales right; and it is worth your while occasionally to have a gauger come in and test them, and see that they are right.

If it is so with sugar, and tea, and coffee, how much more is it so with the treasures of eternity that you are weighing out! You need to have your moral judgments corrected, so that whatever you bring to their test you may be sure is right. These hours of vision are instruments for this very purpose. They rectify our intensifications on the one side, and our undervaluings on the other side. They bring down, or carry up, as the case requires.

I never shall forget the half day that I spent on Gorner Grat, in Switzerland. I was just emerging from that many-formed crystal country (for Switzerland is one vast multiform crystal), and, coming up through the valley of the Rhone, and threading my way along the valley of the Visp, I arrived in the evening at Zermatt, in a perfect intoxication of delight. I lay that night and dreamed of the morning till it broke on me, when we directed our footsteps up the mountain; and after climbing two or three hours, we reached the top of Gorner Grat. It is a barren rock, with snow only here and there in the cracks and crevices; but oh! what a vision opened upon me as I cast my eyes around the horizon! There stood some fifteen of Europe's grandest mountains. There were Monte Rosa, Lyskam, Breithorn, Steinbach, Wieshorn, Mishabel, and, most wonderful of all, Matterhorn, that lifts itself up thirteen thousand feet and more, and is a square-cut granite rock, standing like a vast tower in the air, and all of it apparently, from basis to summit, rising right up before you. And there was Gorner Glacier, a great river of

ice, always moving, but never seeming to move. Down from the sides of these mountains flowed ten distinct glaciers beside. I swept the horizon, and saw at one glance these glorious elevations, on whose tops the sun kindled all the melodies and harmonies of light. I was alone. I disdained company. I was a son of God, and I felt eternity, and God, and glory. And life!—its murmur was like the murmur of the ocean when you hear the beating of the surf against the shore twenty miles away. Life!—it was like the faintest memory of a fading dream. And the influences that had subdued me or warped me—in that royal hour of coronation I lifted them up, and asked, in the light of the other sphere, What are ambition, and vanity, and selfishness, and all other worldly passions? Looking down from that altitude, I gained anew a right measure of life. I never have forgotten it, and I never shall forget it till that vision lapses into the eternal one! Thus, too, one may stand on a mount of vision, quite apart from life and its seductive influences, and there fashion again and readjust all his moral measurements.

My dear Christian brethren, if any of you have been accustomed to look upon these hours as mere visionary hours, in the bad sense of *visionary*, I beseech you to review your judgment. How many of them have you lost! Remember that these hours, although they are not meant to be absolute hours of revelation, are hours of exaltation, in which you have clearer faculties, a higher range of thought and feeling, and a better capacity for moral judgment. You have ecstasies of joy then that perhaps you never have at any other time.

Do not neglect these hours. They are hours in which the gates of the celestial city are opened to you; they are hours in which the guiding stars of heaven shine out for you!

Once when I crossed the sea, for four or five days we were unable to get a glimpse of the stars, and were without an observation. We were running straight for the Newfoundland Banks, and were extremely anxious to learn our where-

abouts. One evening just enough of the clouds lifted to show through the rift a few stars. Our captain, who seemed to be on the alert, was instantly on the spot to take his observation; and he had hardly time to take it before the clouds shut. But he had got it, and the star could not get it back. It was enough! That glimpse of heaven told him where he was on the earth! The cloud shut down again, but it could not rub out his calculations.

There is many a time, while making your voyage on the ocean of life, that a star shines out. It is visible only a moment; but if you make haste you can catch an observation, and then you will know just where you are, and you can sail on with trust in God, and with the guidance of that silent monitor that points the invisible way.

Then take these hours of vision, thank God for them, and use them.

PRAYER.

Be pleased, Almighty God, to give us this day thy spiritual insight and thy divine illumination, by which we shall see beyond the visible, and realize the things that are not yet, but are to be. For thou hast revealed to us the coming future; and though eye hath not seen, and ear hath not heard, the things that shall there be revealed to thy people by the Spirit, it may be known to us as it was to thy servants the prophets and the apostles of old. Out of all the struggles of human life, our souls find rest in the faith that there is a land of peace. In the midst of things so unlovely, we rejoice to believe that there is a realm where love reigns supreme. In the midst of all suffering of body and of mind, cares, and anxieties, and fears, and remorse, and anguishful affections, we rejoice to believe that there is a land where the heart shall be attuned, and shall never fall into discord, nor be rent with it; where there shall be harmony; and where the music of gladness shall sound on forever and forever. We rejoice, though we do not know the way, that Christ is the way, and that if we know him and love him, he will carry us so that no one of us shall be lost in the trackless path thitherward. So they that have gone out have had pilotage. Our dear chil-

dren are not wandering and forlorn, but have quickly reached their home. Our beloved ones that have gone have found their way. The poor, the suffering, the oppressed, the benighted, the longing and yearning souls out of every clime, and all that have known heart-desires, but that did not know what all their heart-throes meant—we rejoice that they have been guided, and have found that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Thy way of working is wonderful beyond our finding out. And there thou hast swept the vast circle which is forever filling, and which never is to be full; and within it thou art making manifest the glory and the beauty of holiness. Thou dwellest there in everlasting blessedness, not in leisure, but ceaselessly active in thought, and feeling, and endeavor. There thou dost put forth thine administration of love. There thou makest all that draw near to thee blessed in thy smile. Thou that art affable and condescending; thou that art the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely—where thou art is heaven. Thou gatherest around thyself blessed companions who are pure, and noble, and great, and good, and happy, and who, by all the power of their greatness and their goodness, are communicating happiness to us. And thither we travel. We seek that land. Though we are full of mistakes, and full of sins that are worse than mistakes, and in the midst of cares and troubles that make the heart sick at times, yet we do not forget the blessed haven toward which we are moving. And as they that are stormed upon the sea, and through weary weeks are buffeted and driven away from the desired port, yet hold on with perseverance, and see by faith in the darkness the promised harbor, so do we, sailing through stormy seas, and beaten about by divers winds, hold on, seeing by faith the promised land. Nor will we grow weary or give up. Blessed be thy name for all the provisions of thy grace, for the teachings of thy Word, and for the sacred intimations of thy Spirit!

And now, O Lord our God, we pray that we may be worthy of this high calling, since thou hast been pleased to lend thy name to us; since thou hast vouchsafed to call us thine, wilt thou lead us. O grant that we may prove ourselves worthy to be the sons of God. May we be without rebuke in the midst of this perverse and crooked generation, among whom we are to shine as lights. Grant that we may know how to put on the garments of salvation, and to make praise comely. Grant that we may know how to adorn our profession, that men, looking upon us, may be won by the beauty of a true Christian life. Grant, we pray thee, that we may rear our

children to love things that are right, and true, and simple; and may religion come to them as the thing most to be desired. Grant that we may be made wise unto salvation.

Bless the members of this Church and this congregation. We thank thee for the history of the years that are past. How great has been thy mercy to us! Our souls know it right well; and we mention it together in the courts of the Lord; and in the great congregation we return our thanks to thee. May that peace, and that concord, and that affection, and that united labor of love, that has characterized the past, go forward with us into the future. May many, by the truth as preached here, be brought to a knowledge of themselves, and to a knowledge of Christ Jesus. May many be persuaded to turn from sin to righteousness; from selfishness to true benevolence. Let this Church shine in the midst of darkness an unending light. May it go down from generation to generation. When we are gone, and those that know these places shall know them no more forever, may more worthy successors be raised up to carry the name of Jesus down from year to year through ages. And grant that revivals of religion and reformations of morals may prevail here.

Grant that this city in which we dwell, signally blessed by many divine favors, may be stimulated to a true spirit of charity. Unite us. May all causes of contentions and offense be taken out of the way. May our citizens, led and prospered of God in the things that are noblest and best, be endued with public spirit. Make them seek to build up the city in elements of true civilization and Christian greatness.

Bless our land. Thou art leading us along the way of humility; but thou hast promised that those that are humble shall be exalted. Let the day of exaltation come. Beat down rebellion, and utterly destroy it. And with it destroy its cause—slavery. And may war cease when injustice ceases. May our laws be purified. May our institutions be purged and made clean. May this nation, that has stood so long representing liberty, no longer slander it by bondage. May it be itself free, and then become the leader of other nations that would be free. And bring that day when all nations shall be sanctified with a noble Christian and civil liberty. Hear us, we beseech of thee, in these our petitions, and answer us through Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

IV.

The Immutability of God,

Interpreted and Applied.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, June 8th, 1862.

The Immutability of God.

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."—Heb., xiii., 8.

"Yesterday" signifies in the Hebrew usage all past time, "to-day" present time, and "forever" all time to come. The declaration then is, that Jesus Christ is eternally the same, so that this attribute, which is ascribed elsewhere to God, is here ascribed to Christ—not only eternity, but immutability.

The immutableness of God is maintained both in the Old Testament and in the New in its every inflection and with great frequency. God is said to be without variableness or shadow of turning. The heavens shall change, the world shall be burned up, the universe itself shall feel the force of time, but God, eternal, shall never change.

This subject is of chief moment. It takes hold of the very essence of our faith, and has the most important bearing upon our comfort. The question is not without difficulties. We have not grasp of mind enough to perceive perfectly the conditions in which God exists. It is no presumption, therefore, against religious teaching that in part it is uncertain, provided we distinctly recognize the uncertainty. No man supposes that the imperfection in a telescope which limits the range of investigation vitiates what we *have* found out respecting astronomy, or that because we can not include the whole sweep of the heavens, nor know all they contain, that therefore what we do know is not to be depended upon as truth. It is true that on every side of investigation we soon reach limits, and that when we have done our best our

knowledge of God is yet remote, imperfect, fragmentary. It is sufficient for guidance in life, but it is not sufficient for the construction of any perfect system.

Therefore, in speaking of this subject—God's immutableness, God's unchangeableness—it is not with the intention of framing any theory, or of presenting to you any thing like a perfected philosophy of the divine nature. It is rather to prepare for certain practical uses than to construct a harmonious system that I shall speak.

The unchangeableness of God was taught originally as contrasted with the fugacious and forever changing views entertained when poets, and mythists, and theologists of antiquity were accustomed to weave just such fancies as they pleased, and twine them about an imaginary God, changing to-day the imaginings of yesterday, as one twines every day fresh flowers about some statue. Without revelation, without even the fixed data which science affords, men formed ideal images and called them God. There was perpetual change. Nothing was established; nothing was veritable beyond dispute. All human conceptions of God were in the shimmering light of ever-shifting imaginations. As opposed to such a view of God, a creature of fancy, that changed with all the moods of the imagination, God was declared to be unchangeable.

His unchangeableness was also taught as opposed to any change of dynasties. The gods of heathen nations made war with each other, maintaining themselves by the exertion of force against other gods, so that there were revulsions in high and heavenly places, and reigning dynasties were overthrown. As opposed to such a conception as this, the Bible teaches God to be one, from eternity and to eternity, sovereign and immutable.

God's unchangeableness was taught, also, as opposed to the caprice of heathen divinities. Heathen gods were but little better than deified despots, holding supremacy for the sake of indulging in all those lusts and appetites in which Orien-

tal monarchs indulged. The gods of antiquity were shameful, subject to fits of wrath, and to the most fitful changes of the most desperate feelings. As opposed to one whose anger was ever to be feared; who was to be placated by blood; whose caprices were such as to keep the devotee in perpetual awe—as opposed to such a one, the Bible revealed Jehovah the unchangeable; who, being once known, was forever to be obeyed, because his commands were equitable and right, and from whom such as learned his will, and followed the path of obedience, had nothing to fear, but every thing to hope.

All our ideas of God must spring from something that is in our own mind. The heathen gods were framed from the suggestions of the appetites, of the passions, of the imagination, and of the intellectual powers, while the Hebrew Scriptures, from the very earliest day, presented to the world the conception of a God framed from the inspiration of the highest moral sentiments. The gods of all the world beside were but deified Passions, at the best nothing more than gods of ideality and the intellectual powers, while from the beginning the Jehovah of the Scriptures has represented the most sublime elements of our being; and, after a period of thousands of years, there is nothing that can be changed in, or added to the simple and illustrious description which God gives of himself in Exodus:

"And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the father upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

Where is there any thing nobler, even in the New Testament, than this presentation of God as merciful, gracious, and

long-suffering; who is abundant in goodness and truth; who keeps mercy for thousands—that is, who holds over mercies through generation after generation; who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet does not do it at the sacrifice of rectitude; who, while he is so full of kindness and love, yet so governs as to punish in the end persistent disobedience, and to punish it with the same stately continuance with which he rewards obedience, to the third and to the fourth generation? It is a declaration of the same thing that nature itself reveals, namely, the transmission of good qualities with their benefits, and of bad qualities with their evils. We need not correct, or in any way augment, such a description. After so long a time, we have no better idea to present than that which was revealed to Moses in the beginning of the record.

As far as the Word of God passed into the hands of men, it became a fundamental part of their idea of God that he was immutable. That being the philosophy, taught and received in all its phases, there sprang out of it, in the course of time, troublesome tendencies, which need to be corrected on the other side. The indiscriminate teaching of this doctrine of God's immutableness has led to a notion of divine quiescence and eternal calm as a part of the nature of God, and indispensable to right conceptions of him. It has been supposed that variation of feeling was inconsistent with unchangeableness; that God is unchangeable in the sense that his feelings flow forever in the same key; that God would be less than perfect if he suffered himself to be changed in feeling by external influences; and that, from considerations of his own interior consciousness, he determines how much and how little he shall feel if he ever changes the volume of his feeling. Thus it has come with many to be supposed that the immutableness of God implies one kind of feeling, eternally flowing in one volume, and with an even current to the end.

This supposition has been enhanced by the idea that God,

knowing all things, could not be subject to those causes of change which act upon us. It has been said that we fluctuate because we are surprised; that we are surprised because we have not power of foreseeing and knowing all things; that our emotions come and go according to the ever-changing moods and interpretations of our understanding, which understanding, beginning with imperfect hypotheses, comes to imperfect conclusions, and puts us in a condition of changeableness; and that such can not be the case with God, who, seeing the end from the beginning, never learns any thing. It is said that God's feeling can not change, because he is exempt from those illusions, partial views, and imaginations which in us cause incessant fluctuation. Hence it has been supposed that God neither kindles with joy nor is saddened with grief; that he is moved neither with ecstasy nor sorrow; that in serenity and quiescence he holds himself aloof from the fluctuations of emotion and feeling for evermore. And there are some dispositions to whom this view of God seems attractive.

Now, in the first place, this is wholly opposed to the representations both of the Old and of the New Testament. There is the general principle laid down that God is unchangeable; but that has respect to his moral disposition, and to the comprehensive method by which he administers, rather than to the specific flow of his feeling. There can be conceived no greater range of variation than that which is ascribed to the feelings of Jehovah — of gladness and sorrow; of ecstasy and sadness; of approbation and of wrath. He is represented as experiencing moral emotions in all their shades or degrees of intensity. Let a man read the Old Testament and be asked, "Is God a being subject to rise and fall of feeling?" and he would be surprised that such a question should be addressed to him. There is no word in the English tongue that is not employed to signify the gradations of feeling imputed to God—that is, gradations of feeling in right attributes. There is no fluctuation of feeling in God

as between good and bad. He is always good, always high, always holy, always loving, always boundless in mercy, though he is just and severe in penalty, and not without indignation. But it is taught throughout the Scriptures that God's feelings are graded according to the circumstances which are brought before him in the divine administration.

It is said that this is so only because, in depicting the character of God, human instruments of language had to be used which do not represent the reality; that this representation of God comes from the modes employed, and that he can not be supposed to have these fluctuations of feeling because men have them from whose experience our conception of him must needs be drawn. In other words, it is supposed that, as we learn through the medium of language, and as human language represents human passions and feelings, there is always an error which springs from the instrument by which the revelation is made. And this involves the doctrine that it is not possible for God to make a revelation in human language to us. If, when you teach by human language, you say, "It teaches something, but not the real truth;" if you say that there is that about it which makes it impossible to understand what it teaches, and that it teaches *toward* a thing, but does not teach the thing itself, I reply that if it only teaches toward God, it does not teach him at all. If human language is not true as far as it goes, if it is not true in kind and nature, and if there is this vice in it, that it represents a human element which is never applicable to the divine mind, then it can not convey a revelation of God to us. But even if it be said that in some cases we are to qualify these representations; if it be said that the language which describes God is borrowed from things human, as, for instance, where he is said to have arms, and hands, and feet, and eyes, and ears; that we are to drop the idea of these things as belonging to him, or use them only as figures; that the names of members of the animal kingdom and the feathered tribes are applied to God, he being called a lion and an eagle as much as a man,

and that we are not to adhere to the literal meaning of the words employed under such circumstances, but are to understand by "lion" great courage or power, and by "eagle" the same quality; and that, if we depart from the commonly accepted interpretations of language in respect to the animal creations and men's physical organs, we must do the same in respect to human attributes, then I reply that, although it is true that many things taught of God are taught by language that is to be taken figuratively, and to be understood as conveying a moral idea rather than the physical meaning which, if it were literally interpreted, would be ascribed to it, yet it is not possible that there should have been for four thousand years a representation of God through all kinds of figures, and in every conceivable form of language, agreeing in one thing, namely, that God is subject to moods, to rise and fall of right feelings, if there had been a latent error, and if the divine mind could not be represented by human instruments.

There is nowhere in the New Testament any variation of the mode of representing God as employed in the Old. In the one, as in the other, it is taught that the divine mind is a mind that has sensibility; that in its action the law of moral dynamics is recognized, strong causes and minor causes producing corresponding effects on the divine mind, and the response to causes in that mind, as in human minds, varying in degree and kind according to the nature and amount of the moral pressure exerted.

But, still farther, I remark that this attempt to divest God of mobility of mind and feeling, and to make him impassive and quiescent, is contrary not only to the Old Testament and to the New, but to every analogy of nature. In the animal creation, fixedness and continuity of sensation and sensibility are in the ratio of lowness of organization. As you go down in the scale of being, not only are powers less in number, but their range is more limited. On the other hand, as you ascend the scale, variety of emotion and of thought, susceptibility to motive, a wider range, more mobility, are striking-

ly developed. The invertebrates—molluscs, insects, worms, and such like—you will find to be less and less variable, if you examine their history, as you descend. They have little feeling, they are comparatively unexcitable, their sensations are confined to a very limited scale. All invertebrates, clear down to vegetation and inorganic matter, are characterized by an approach toward immobility, by fixedness, and by a narrow range of life. As you rise, however, from them to the vertebrates, you begin to find a wider range. When you reach the dog and the horse, you find the rude element of mental faculty; when you reach men, you find in them a multiplicity of faculties; in studying men, as you go from the bottom to the top, where they are thoroughly educated and civilized, you find that mind-growth consists, not in an increase of the number of faculties, but in an increase of the mobility of the faculties already possessed—in their susceptibility to receive impressions; and as you give man growth, you find in him not only a given number of feelings, but the power of rising and falling in those feelings.

Thus, if we seek for an interpretation of the divine character in the analogies of nature, we must not forget that in nature perfection and the utmost sensibility lie in the direction of complexity. And if we are searching for the greatest and the best, we should expect beforehand to find just that which the Old Testament long ago taught us, and which the New Testament corroborated, namely, that God, the best and the greatest, although in moral dispositions, in character, and in aims of government he is immutable, is not immutable in this sense, that there are no shades, variety, or gradations of emotion.

Such views of God as those which I am combating, if established and received generally, would shut off human feelings from him. A God whose feelings never move; a God that never has a new suggestion or a new emotion; a God that is in a state of perpetual quietude—such a God the human mind can not approach. It is utterly impossible to bring

the heart to love an impassive God. No man can creep up on such a smooth and glassy surface, and hold on to it, and experience toward it feelings of adoration, and sympathy, and yearning, and love, and desire. A crystal set in the centre of the earth would answer the purpose of a divinity as well as a God that had no change of thought or emotion. It is impossible for men to be drawn toward a being so entirely different from that which the human soul was constituted to cherish and to love.

It may seem as though this were a matter of mere unimportant speculation; but it is much more important than many imagine. For there are those who teach that God can not suffer, and that suffering is incompatible with perfection. They hold to the view that God dwells in an eternal calm of joy which makes it impossible for him to suffer. So universal had this idea become, that when the doctrine of Christ as God was believed and advocated, men said, "What! do you teach that God died?" Why, within my remembrance, the New England hymn-books were changed to get rid of the idea that God died in Christ. The incompatibility of suffering with perfection was one of the arguments employed by controversial writers to show the preposterousness of the dogma that God, in the person of the Savior, suffered for the world. The orthodox mind even began to be pained at the mention of such a thing. It was declared to be blasphemous to ascribe suffering, and much more blasphemous to ascribe death to God.

To teach me that God can not suffer is to take away from my mind the most fundamental conception of what it is to be God. I can not conceive of a being worthy of universal sympathy, and honor, and glory, that can not suffer. Nor does the fact that God knows all things and foresees all things change that indispensable quality of mind which makes it necessary that love should fluctuate. Can I look upon my child and see all the things that are befalling him, and not have my feelings moved, though I know that in the end he will overcome the troubles by which he is beset? My sympathy for

him leads me to follow him with my moods, and I go up and down the ways through which he is called to pass. And is it to be taught that God, sitting in the heavens, and beholding the sufferings of the world, is unmoved? To bear mankind in his bosom; to bow down his majesty and become a man, that he might put himself underneath the human race and lift them up—is that the conduct of a God that does not know how to suffer? Is there in such conduct no token of mutability, of everlasting changeableness of feeling—not in kind, but in augmentation, in diminution, in adaptation? And can you conceive of a human soul attempting to love a being that is so perfectly untroubled, so entirely undisturbed, that in a period of six thousand years there was not a single ripple on his soul? Why, a piece of feldspar has been as constant as such a God would be! A rock-crystal, shut up in its rock-bed, can say, "I was made so perfect that I have existed without one particle of mutation for thousands of years." If there is no such change as I speak of, one is as good as the other. But if there is, in the boundlessness of the divine mind, such exquisite susceptibility that a child, speaking, can produce an impression, in its measure, upon the divine feeling, and that a patriarch, praying, can produce upon it, in his measure, a mightier impression; that in such feelings, joy and sorrow, with endless iterations and fluctuations, come and go, keeping evermore within the bounds of rectitude, then is not the nature of God one toward which your soul should aspire, and one which should draw out your sympathy and command your love? It was such susceptibility that the disciples found in the Savior. There were to him not only hours of joy in which his face shone so that the men who saw him stood in awe of him, but hours of sadness in which he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." Between the lowest depths of suffering and the highest moods of enjoyment his feelings played. They ranged from the top to the bottom of the scale. And in the Savior was given us the pattern of how it is with God, the eternal Spirit.

It is important to show that God is not immutable in another sense. It is sometimes urged by disputants in this matter that he never changes his mind nor his purpose. There has been perplexity on account of the representations of Scripture in reference to God's repenting. In one place we read, "The strength of Israel will not repent; for he is not a man that he should repent." And yet in other places it is recorded that God repented him that he had made man, and repented him that he had established kingdoms. Again and again you will find in the Bible declarations of God's having repented. It is supposed that he could not repent, and yet it is said repeatedly that he did repent. Repentance has two meanings. Its original meaning was simply *changing one's course*, without any intimation respecting the nature of the change as good or bad. But it has come to have a technical meaning, signifying change on account of profound self-consciousness of wrong. We mean by repentance conviction of having done wrong, and change in consequence of that conviction.

Now both of these things are true which are declared of God in Scripture. God never does repent as man does, who is imperfect, and who turns back on his path because he has gone wrong. God never goes wrong, and he never has occasion to repent in the sense of changing from a wrong to a right course; but he may and does repent in the original sense.

If you are about to punish a child that has done wrong, and he bursts into tears and says, "I have done wrong: punish me! punish me! only help me," you relent, and your hand goes down, and you say to yourself, "I meant to punish him, but this repentance disarms me;" and, turning to the child, you say, "Go free, and sin no more."

The Scriptures teach that God adapts his feelings to the facts that arise in the administration of his moral government. There is a difference between the Bible and the systems that are based upon nature. All theologies outside of

the Bible make God to be a fate. Inflexible, intense, and certain fate is part and parcel of every system that is founded upon mere naturalism. In the Bible, however, God is represented as turning with all the facility of change that belongs to the parental mind. Prayer, repentance, and the hope of salvation are based upon the truth that God, although immutable in some respects, is in other respects subject to endless variations and flexibilities.

What, then, are the respects in which God is to be supposed to be immutable? In the first place, no change is to be imputed to him such as comes to us by reason of age and the wearing of the body. It has been a mooted question whether the mind ever suffers. I have no theory on the subject. The materialist says that there is no mind separated from fibre, and the spiritualist says that mind can not be identified with matter. I do not know which is right, and I do not care. All I know is that there is such a thing as mind, and that it acts with and through matter. Let me be assured of the fact that, whether matter or spirit, it is immortal, and I do not care what the fundamental thread is, the vibrations of which you call mind. All I want to know is that it does not perish, and that there is immortality. But, though we are immortal, our life begins with ignorance and inexperience. Then come the middle periods of life, bringing experience and knowledge. Then comes old age, with successive limitations. Branch after branch seems to be lopped off, till at last the man has parted from the joys of the body, from the pursuits of the mind, and even from the feelings, moral and social, that before made him glorious. We see him, and yet see nothing of him.

Antiquity dreaded old age. The saddest things in Grecian literature are those that indicate a longing for perpetual youth. It was a blind groping after immortality. What the ancients wished was that they might never grow old. Running all through fabulous history was the idea that the gods gave to their favorites the power of being immortal.

But what was that compared with what Christianity conceives to be immortality—eternal youth in heaven?

Now the imputing to God of weariness, and wasting, and age, such as belong to us in this sphere, is contrary to Scripture and contrary to fact. If God was young when creation began, he is just as young to-day. The old painters of the Middle Age borrowed their conceptions of God the Father from the representations of Jupiter; and Jupiter was, for the most part, made to represent a man in the prime of life, strong, with a long beard, and with flowing locks. Then, as the idea of wisdom was added to that of strength, because wisdom usually comes with age, Jupiter was made to grow older and older, till at last he was as venerable in appearance as Moses; and the representations of Jehovah in the times of Raphael and Michael Angelo, drawn from the later representations of Jupiter, were nothing more than representations of a noble old man. I never look at them without revulsion. A noble old man is one of the most glorious spectacles in the world; but an old man is no representation of my God, who, though he has existed from eternity, has no wrinkle; no snow-white locks; no waste and wear; no weariness; no infirmity; no mark of age. God is forever young and forever old. He is not, as men are, changed by time. It is blessed to think of being eternally young; but the thought that, while men are wrinkled, and bent, and scarred by disease, and toil, and suffering, and are subject to all manner of infirmities, there is One that is unchanged by time, and is forever in the bloom of youth—this thought comes home with sweetness and comfort to every heart.

Nor is there any such change possible to God as belongs to men by reason of their external circumstances. We are what we are very much on account of the things that happen to us. Prosperity makes some men ripe, and rich, and good, and it spoils some men. It seems to be a random servant that unlocks in different houses different doors. The golden key of prosperity goes into one house, and unlocks the door

where the passions are kept, and out come selfishness, and pride, and vanity, and it locks another door where generosity and humility sleep. It goes into another house, and unlocks the door where goodness is, and lets it come out, and locks the door where the evil dispositions are huddled together. Prosperity does for one man just the opposite of what it does for another. And the same is true of adversity. Some, with adversity, grow ugly, and with prosperity grow genial; and others are made genial by adversity and ugly by prosperity. In other words, men are subject to mutations caused by the working on them of external influences. But God is mightier than any external influences, because he is the cause of all external influences.

Nor is there any change in the great moral attributes which form the basis of the divine character—justice, and truth, and love. That which was love in the beginning is love now, and will be love for evermore. Truth and justice are the same now that they were in the beginning, and that they ever will be. The applications of them vary, but the essential moral qualities themselves never change. God is immutable in the fundamental elements of his being.

Nor is there any change in the essential purposes of God's moral government. It is not to be supposed that he came to the head of the affairs of the universe without a plan. It is not to be supposed that he made one thing, and then determined what next he would make. It is to be supposed (and nature as well as Scripture bears witness to it) that God saw the end from the beginning, that he follows a plan eternally ordained, and that the whole vast administration of creation is carried on in pursuance of certain great fixed ideas.

In view of these statements, I remark, first, that it is such a view of God as this that inspires confidence and trust in him. It is such a view of God as this that gives a man fixedness in his own mind. The stronger we are, the weaker we feel. That is, the power to be strong is the power to ap-

preciate the absence of strength. And every heart has times when it longs for something that is mightier than itself, and something that does not change. With change in us and all about us, we have nothing to lean on unless we have One Supreme, who controls heaven and earth, and all laws, spiritual and physical, and that is always true to his own nature, to his own attributes, and to his revealed Word. We want to feel that though there are endless variations in goodness and justice, and endless degrees of these things in the divine mind, yet there is nothing there that traverses justice or good, or that changes these qualities, making that which is evil and unjust in this age just and good in the next age.

It has been supposed that the doctrine of God's decrees would repel men, and drive them into infidelity. On the contrary, it draws men. God's decrees may be taught so as to make men feel that they are oppressive; but the thought that the decrees of God run through time and eternity, and that he is true to them, so far from being repulsive, is exceedingly attractive. You might as well say that the laws of nature are repulsive as to say that God's decrees are so. It is constancy that is the foundation of hope, and civilization, and every thing that is blessed in the world. Men are glad that light is always light, that electricity is always electricity, that all forces of nature are always true to their laws. Men are thankful that the stars revolve perpetually in their appointed courses. Men rejoice in the fact that there is fixity in all those methods by which the material universe is controlled. And the immutableness of God in the great elements of his character—truth, justice, goodness, and love—is subject-matter for profound gratulation.

It is such a view as this that gives us confidence in times of trouble and confusion. Men are very egotistical. They learn almost inevitably to feel that they are more important than all else, and that other things are important in the proportion in which they are related to them. This nation is in the midst of fraternal war and civil confusions. The govern-

ment is threatened with destruction, the customs of society are disturbed. On every hand men are saying, "Who shall deliver us out of all this turmoil?" They shut their eyes on the future and say, "It looks dark and terrible."

What do you know about to-morrow? I know that the Lord God sits on the circle of the earth. I know that the hearts of men are in his hand, and that he turns them as rivers of water are turned. I know that he is not frightened by the breaking out of these revulsions. He has had them on his hands ever since he has had the world on his hands. Truth will triumph. Justice is slow, but will surely conquer. Good is born with labor-pains. Evil seems stronger than virtue. But, in the long course, right is sure to prevail.

When a young mother has her first babe, if it whimpers and cries she thinks that pains and diseases are about to seize it. But the grandmother, that has had the care of her own children, and her children's children, is not troubled when she hears a child cry. Now God is the everlasting Father of nations. For over six thousand years he has been educating them toward manhood. There is no possible fantasy, or error, or deceit that is not perfectly familiar to him. There is not a road of prosperity or of adversity that he does not know. There is not a path that nations have ever trod, or that they will ever tread, with which he is not acquainted. And, you that are distressed, where is your God? Are you men that have faith in God when the sun shines, and that have no faith in him when it is cloudy? Are you men that have arms when there is no enemy at hand, but that throw them away when the enemy comes? God is a God for times of war, as well as a God for times of peace.

I believe the purposes of God respecting this nation are undisturbed. They flow on, and will flow on, in spite of any power that can rise against them. They that destroy the poor, saying, "How doth God know?" God holds them in derision, and will bring them to naught. My mind in reference to the future is in undisturbed repose. What it shall

be I know not; but this is my confidence: God planted this nation, he has nourished it thus far, he has a great purpose to fulfill by it, and he will make it illustrious in the end. The same God that took care of the children of Israel when flying from their oppressors; the same God that walked with them in the desert forty years; the same God that led them to the promised land; the same God that was in Jerusalem when Christ walked its streets, and that in the darkness of crucifixion yet saw light, even when his thorn-crowned Son saw none; the God of those that in every age have sealed their faith with blood; the God of Luther and Cromwell; our father's God; the God of all the earth—does he not see? and will he not do right? And are there, in heaven, in hell, or on earth, any that are cunning enough to outwit him? He has appointed the road, and we shall walk on it and triumph, not because we are strong, but because the Lord God Almighty will not change, and will accomplish the thing whereunto he hath set his hand. Trust in God!

PRAYER.

Thou hast taught us, O Lord our God, to draw near to thee with prayer and supplication. Thou hast taught us by thy word, but yet more tenderly and effectually by our experience. The memory of thy goodness, the hours of communion, the answers of prayer, our sorrows checked or comforted often, mercies abundant beyond all that we asked or thought—these experiences draw us again and again. We do not come to a desert land. Our faces are toward the garden of the Lord, full of all sweet and pleasant things. We sit down beneath its arbors. There we find thee. And no longer, walking in the cool of the day, do we seem naked, or do we feel afraid, and seek to hide ourselves from God; but now, knowing that we are naked and open before him with whom we have to do, we come boldly that we may obtain mercy, and grace to help in time of need. We rejoice in that affluent mercy, we rejoice in that grace that knows how to accept those who are weak and sinful, and how to redeem them out of their transgression, and to bless them, notwith-

standing their iniquity. The multitude of thy mercies, the wonder and the glory of thy grace, fill our souls with rejoicing and with a humble confidence. For it is not of ourselves that we shall be saved. All the good that is in us is but as a germ. The evil things that we do are innumerable; and whether they be sins or imperfections, they are alike the causes of perpetual stumbling and downfall. And there is nothing in ourselves that we can look upon with complacency, nor is there any thing that we do in our best moments that we can look upon with favor except in the light of thy grace. We are to thee as our children are to us. It is our love that makes their homely words and imperfect deeds attractive. We rejoice that we have a God to whom we can come with our inexperience, and want, and ignorance, and weakness, and find sympathy, and forgiveness, and succor. We rejoice that thou wilt strengthen, as thou hast in days past, all those that lean upon thy rod and thy staff. Grant that we may not be tempted with a guilty presumption to make use of thy mercy, that we may the easier and the longer sin unchecked and unfearing. Grant that we may have more of that salutary and reverential fear which love inspires, that it may grieve us to grieve thee; that it may punish us to know that we are turning from thee; and that it may make us more and more earnest in doing things that are pleasing in thy sight. Wilt thou look upon this congregration according to the heart of every one in it. Thou knowest the history of each. Our thoughts and feelings are plain before thee long before we ourselves discern them. The intents of the heart are known to thee. Search every heart. Administer to every one. Bless with the smiles of thy favor those that seem desolate and alone. Give to them the sense of a God near at hand. Upon those who are sitting solitary may a great light arise. May those that are in darkness be illumined. May there come songs in the night to those who hitherto have had but tears and sighs. We pray that the light of the goodness of God in Christ Jesus may spring up in every dwelling and in every heart. Strengthen every one to bear the burdens incident to his life, the temptations that belong specially to him, and the trials that belong to his welfare. O God, thou canst do what no man can do! Thou art not weary of the greatness of thy work, nor does it trouble thee to distribute thy thought and thy care to infinite numbers. Thou that teachest the rains to spread over continents; thou that givest the winds command that they fan the earth—thou canst think of all as

if each were but one in thy thought and regard. We beseech of thee, turn to each one of us this morning, and give to each specially that which he needs. Grant forgiveness, encouragement, inspiration, faith, and love; and may we all feel that we are clothed to-day in the garments of the sanctuary. O Lord, we pray that thou wilt bless us in our homes; and grant that the affliction that thou art laying upon us may be blessed of God to our spiritual good. May we not murmur nor repine. May we not discriminate between our experience and that of others, and ask God why we are punished, and they are spared from the burdens which are put upon us. Grant that we may defer all unknown and strange things to that bright hour when we shall know as we are known, and thou shalt interpret to us the wisdom of thine economy toward us in this mortal state. Little by little we find out, even on earth, the folly of our former murmurings; and grant that we may be made wise, and that we may feel that it is the Lord that deals with us, who can not but do right; that Lord who stretched out his hands in death, and that can not but stretch them forth with power to save those for whom he died!

Grant that all the events that are transpiring in our time and nation may be for the furtherance of thy honor and glory. Teach the people what is the iniquity of that injustice of which we have been so heedless in days that are past. We have gone on to purchase peace with money, and now that disgraceful peace brings torment. We have run eagerly to idolatry in this nation, though better taught by the fathers —though instructed by a free Gospel. We have permitted this nation to be built up of wood, and hay, and stubble, and the day of fire has come; and if we are saved it must be so as by fire, consuming all the base material with which we have built. Grant that the lesson which this great people shall learn may be a lesson of justice and righteousness. May those that stand afar off, scoffing and deriding moral principle; may those that weave webs and meshes by which to entangle men's thoughts, and to build up this nation afresh upon pride, and selfishness, and avarice, and lust, and passion, find that wind from out of thy sanctuary that shall whirl away their devices as the chaff is swept from the summer threshing-floor. May that trial through which we are passing humble us for our sins, and make us feel our pride, and vanity, and avarice, and the inhumanity which has gone with them, and the guilt of our want of sympathy with Christ in his poor and despised ones. May there be a Christian heart

given to this people, that they may rise up and ask what God would have them to do; and may they then seek the establishment upon firm foundations of a concord in the future of those great elements of justice, and liberty, and truth, and purity, which shall stand, though the earth be shaken to its foundation. More and more, as the years roll on, we see the wrecks of nations whose sins have desolated them. May we learn the better lesson of building in righteousness, and insuring with the God that rules in the heavens.

Wilt thou hear us in these petitions, not alone for the sake of ourselves, of our families, and of this land, but for the sake of the whole human family. We believe, O God, that thou art the universal father; and we pray for all that are thine, though they may be ignorant and erring, and though they may have wandered from their Father's house. We beseech of thee that thou wilt watch over the ignorant, and the poor, and the outcast, every where. And may those nations that are preparing, treading steadily and wearily their way through difficulty toward liberty, become more and more potent in body not only, but in soul. May men learn the secret of liberty. May they understand that it is the soul that can not be enslaved; that it is only the body that can; and may they therefore be lifted out of animalism more and more into intelligence, into pure affections, and into the higher moral sentiments, that thus they may come through the liberty that Christ gives into that glorious liberty which is being outwardly developed among nations. And may the whole world be speedily gathered in, Jew and Gentile, and all the earth see thy salvation. We ask it for Christ's sake. Amen.

V.

The Intercession of Christ.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, in the Fall of 1861.

The Intercession of Christ.

"Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—Heb., vii., 25.

The Savior is held up to the hope and confidence of men because he is immortal — ever-living — never growing old, like the priest; and because he is an intercessor. It is of this intercessorship of Christ that I wish to speak, and in the same spirit in which it is here introduced; not as a fertile theme for ingenious speculation, but as a ground for hope and consolation.

An *interceding* Savior is a theme much used by Paul, though not alone by him. In the ninth chapter of Hebrews it is brought out very strongly:

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, *now to appear in the presence of God for us.*"

In the eighth chapter of Romans, in that triumphant outburst that almost preludes the rejoicings of heaven, Paul says,

"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also *maketh intercession* for us."

The same truth is signified by the term *Mediator*, though perhaps with some shade of difference in its applications, but it covers substantially the same ground that the term *intercessor* does.

The benefit of the view which you derive from the intercessorship of Christ will depend largely upon your own ac-

ceptance and interpretation of it. If you associate it with polemical disputes of times past; if you attach to it prejudices because it has been held by men with whom, generally, you do not agree; or if you have been accustomed to defend it against enemies, surrounding it like a fort with all means of defense, until the doctrine suggests mainly ideas of controversy, not consolation, then it can be of little use to you.

If, however, you have been accustomed to look at the intercessorship of Christ from the side of human want and weakness, and their relation to the heart of God; if in your imagination there has been kindled a glowing vision rather than a positive philosophic idea; if you accept an interceding Christ as the surety that there is in heaven living pity, sympathy, thought, superintendence, divine providence, unfailing love and remembrance—in short, grace to help in time of need, so that you shall not be left to your own wisdom in selecting the things most needed in spiritual development (like a man that, being sick, should be put into an apothecary's shop, and left to pick out his own medicines), but that there is a Physician, a Mediator, an Intercessor, a Care-taker, who undertakes to do for you all *the things that you need to have done*, whatever they may be—things that you do not know enough to do for yourself, whether your not knowing arises from your sinfulness, or from the limitation of your faculties, or from your imperfect knowledge; and that your highest interests will be attended to, not by your own circumscribed empirical knowledge, but by One whose life, I had almost said, is divinely professional for that purpose—then in the faith of such an intercessorship of Christ you will have comfort of believing, consolation in trouble, joy and peace for the present time, and hope for the time to come.

It is into this last spirit that I shall endeavor to induct you. This topic, however, has been so much discussed, and there are so many doubts in different minds concerning it, that perhaps we may profitably make some exclusions and advance some suggestions which shall clear away difficulties,

and form a basis on which your affections and your spiritual emotions may work.

In transferring to the divine mind, in our conception, any human relation or character, we must carefully avoid ascribing that which is purely secular, and subject to human or material limitations. Thus the Scriptures teach us that our God is Judge; and yet it will not do to take all our experience of judgeship, and ascribe the whole to the divine nature. The methods by which men come to a knowledge of facts, and to a just judgment, arise in part from the limitations of the human mind; and these limitations can not be supposed to exist in a Being whose mind transcends the bounds of time and of space. It is only an ideal element, derived from human life, that we ascribe to God. The purest human love is too coarse for the Perfect One. By our imagination we refine it, we lift it above those impairing conditions which exist in every human experience, and, rubbing out the narrow lines of weakness, we behold it infinite and divine! The Fatherhood of God, if taken in a large way, not too minutely and critically, embodies a transcendent truth. And yet, if you go into an examination of precisely what a father is in human experience, and transfer that bodily to the divine mind, you will embarrass more than help.

Many stand in doubt on the subject of the intercessorship of Christ because they have attempted to apply to the divine mind those features of intercessorship which are human —the incidents of weakness, ignorance, and of physical forms and necessities. Failing in that, they have either abandoned the subject in disappointment, or, holding to it, stumbled into errors.

We are not, therefore, to understand the intercessorship of Christ as implying any strangeness, unacquaintance, or indifference in the Eternal Father respecting our affairs. If we send an embassador to England, it is because we suppose that the government or people have not knowledge or interest enough in our affairs to act justly toward us, or that they

will lack motives for acting, or that their motives for right action will need to be intensified. Hence in foreign courts we have ministers to intercede for us. They are mediators; they are intercessors. You must drop all such notions of the intercessorship of Christ as that he is to convey information not now possessed, to adjust facts, or to make things clearer in the divine mind than they were already, otherwise you ascribe to God elements of intercessorship which are purely the result of the limitations of the human condition.

Still less must we imagine any reluctance, any unwillingness in the divine mind, whether from just anger or from reasons of state, which, though insuperable without persuasion, may be pleaded away. Many persons have said, "We can not conceive of a God who, sitting in a kind of prejudice of anger, will not do things that are loving and beneficent to the human family in its sin-beset condition until reasoned with. We can conceive of a proud parent whose feeling has been wounded by the misconduct of a child, who needs persuasion to induce him to do right, and to help him bring his own best feelings into the judgment seat, and to keep down his worst feelings; but to suppose that the divine Father requires any such intercession as this; to imagine that there is wrath, burning hot; an unquenched, an unslaked zeal of justice in his bosom, which will down when Christ comes before him, but on which no effect is produced when men, in all the generations of time, and in myriad numbers, suffering, weeping, and wailing, lift themselves up before him, is simply awful! We could not worship such a God." Neither could I. There is no such God. Nothing of this is taught in the Word of God. To be sure, there is an attempt, by figures and intensifications, to show that God, whether men do right or wrong, is a conservator of justice, but nowhere is there an attempt to show that God has such a love of abstract justice that he is without sympathy for concrete life and suffering, and that a second person, a new element, is

needed to bring him, as it were, to consent to the exercise of his attributes of kindness and mercy.

The effect of such a view would be to render the divine nature less earnest and benevolent without Christ than with him, whereas the Bible teaches us that God was always infinitely benevolent and earnest. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it. Christ is represented, not as indifferent, nor as sped, like a silver arrow from a golden bow, without his own volition. He is always shown as concurrent and accordant with the divine mind. The Bible is emphatic in this — that Christ is the gift of God; that, beholding the world in wickedness and sorrow, God was moved by his characteristic benevolence to the work of saving mankind through Jesus Christ; and any view that contradicts these representations of Scripture must be wrong, and will mislead us in forming our conceptions of the nature of Deity.

Nor are we to suppose it necessary that there should be an intercessor because the whole work of redemption and salvation was a work that required more aid than naturally belonged to one mind.

While we exclude these elements of weakness and limitation known to be human, we must not, on the other hand, exclude too much, nor assume an undue degree of knowledge.

No man is prepared to show that the mind of God is not affected by the intercessions of friendship and love. It is true that God is in and of himself just and good, and that there is no conflict between his justice and benevolence. It is true that he needs not to take counsel with any. But we are not prepared to say that there is not in the divine disposition a great pleasure in being pleaded with; that God does not prefer to act in the atmosphere of personal sympathy, and in the warmth of desires presented to him by others, rather than in the silence and seclusion of absolute superiority.

In forming a conception of God, men have sometimes lifted

him above all human sympathies into the heavenly spheres; and then they raise him above the help of heavenly intelligence, and at last remove him so far that only the most lithe and nimble imaginations can reach him at all; and then, when they have put him above all men, and angels, and thrones, and dominions, they think they have a true conception of God. They think that to be divine, requires one to be lifted out of and above all sympathy with created things. It is natural, but it shows how unskillful we are in fashioning our ideas of the Head of the Universe; for, if there is one thing more resplendent than another, it is God Immanuel. And what is God Immanuel but this: *God with us*—God brought down to our sympathy and fellowship?

When men worshiped leeks and onions, and monkeys, and sticks, and stones, it was necessary to carry up the conception of the divine nature away from these lower images and representations. All men must form their ideal of God out of something that is in themselves, and the heathen naturally form theirs out of their own lower passions and bodily appetites and desires. The Greeks formed theirs largely from their æsthetical feelings. Our Christian method of forming an ideal of God is to conceive of the divine nature through the light of our highest and most purified affections, and of our noblest moral sentiments.

In the earlier periods of human thought it was needful to carry men away from gross images; and you will find all through the Old Testament representations of God as sitting among the stars; as lifted above the fens and miasma of this lower earth; as higher than kings and princes; as having no need of counselors; as being instructed by none. "I am that I am," said he, in the majesty of solitude. It is declared, "The Lord, he is God; there is none else." These declarations were true in the relations in which they were then applied. The design was to teach that God is not capable of being represented by any material thing; that the divine Spirit vastly transcends all our ordinary and earth

ly images; that God can not be represented from the outside world, nor from the lower elements of human nature. That work is done. We need no longer to secure to men the idea of greatness—superiority—transcendent elevation. We are even in some danger of carrying this view to an extreme.

The Old Testament having, in accordance with an existing want, revealed God as above the low conceptions of men with regard to his character, and represented him as distinct from their idols, and as grander than any material image, the New Testament, in response to a need in the opposite direction, has brought the divine mind back from its lofty height into human sympathies and feelings, saying, "Immanuel! Immanuel!"—*God with us.* It teaches, to be sure, that God is infinite, eternal, glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises; but it also teaches that he descends to the lowest; that he is interested in the least things; that from his eyes nothing is hid; that he has a father's compassion, and bears our sins, and carries our very sorrows. Under the teachings of the Old Testament, there was danger that God would be conceived of as inaccessible and unsympathetic; therefore the New Testament shows us that the true nature of God is to be great, but tender; to be vast and powerful, but to use his vastness and power with love and gentleness. I do not mean that the spirit of the New Testament is not found in the Old, and of the Old in the New. The fatherhood of God is magnificently presented in the Old, and the kingship of God sublimely represented in the New. No tenderness can surpass the pleading of God with his people, as represented by the later books of the Old Testament. Yet it can scarcely be denied that the chief and characteristic aim of the pictures which the Old Testament affords was to present God as august, sublime, unapproachable—fearful in praises! that of the New, to present him as rich in love, tender, sympathetic, accessible as a Father to the least and the lowest.

Out of this misconception of God as unapproachable in

greatness grew, I think, the idea that he was independent and self-contained in such a sense that it would never make any difference with his counsels what another thought or wished —a false idea. For, on the contrary, there are many analogies, and there is much positive instruction in the Word of God to show that the divine nature is such that it *does* make a great deal of difference what are the thoughts and wishes of those about him. There is a social element in God, which, though it does not act as the social element does in us, may be somewhat interpreted by our experience. How is it that the parent who means to give his child the things that it needs, finds it pleasanter to give them if the child comes and asks for them with winning ways and earnest persuasion, than if he merely gives them from a sense of what is fit and best? There are many things that you will do, and mean to do for a friend, but if there comes one that loves both you and that friend, and asks you to do those same things, you are pleased, because it gives you the opportunity, by a single kindness, to strike more than one chord. Under such circumstances, we like to do a thing for one person for the sake of another. It is pleasanter to do things in the atmosphere of persuasion. Another man's mind has an effect on our minds in things that we mean to do of ourselves, and are competent to do without any aid from others.

Can any interpret the doctrine of prayer, as laid down in the New Testament, on any other ground than this? Christ taught that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. And he said, "There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he

bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."*

What is the argument? This was a judge neither moved by a sense of divine rectitude nor by a spirit of human sympathy, and it seemed as though he was completely shut up to injustice; and yet, there was a place in which the mind of the poor widow could reach his. She could affect him by an importunity which would make his life a burden to him if he did not grant her request. The motive was the lowest which could enter into even such a bad mind as his, but he was accessible to that. His mind was covered over at the top, it was walled up at the sides, and there was no entrance to it till you got to the bottom; but even as low as that there was a place where she could get at it. His was the worst kind of a mind; the mind of God is the noblest kind of a mind; and the contrast in the parable is this: if, when you take the worst man you can find, there is a way of getting at his mind; then, when you implore God, who is the noblest and best of all beings, shall his mind not be accessible in every royal attribute? It is accessible to his elect at every point from the top to the bottom. Though he may tarry long; though he may take his own infinite leisure, he will avenge them. God is not a being that draws himself apart, and out of the reach of persuasion. He is one that is susceptible of being influenced by other beings. Any sound doctrine of prayer necessitates the implication that the nature of God's mind is such that other minds have power upon it—not to cause him to do things that he would not do of his own accord, but to cause him to do them with more gladness than he otherwise would if left to himself.

Christ's example ratified his teaching. He was accustomed to go to God with implorations, and to plead with him, as if his pleading was needful to the granting of the things which he asked. It was not needful, perhaps, to the fact of their being procured, though it may have been needful to the

* Luke, xviii., 1–8.

pleasure or gladness of giving, to which the mind of God was susceptible.

The popular idea, then, that God is so self-contained that nothing which man can do can influence or affect him, is false. It is true that he is all-wise, limitless in knowledge, and all-sufficient; but it is also true that he likes to have the play of other minds upon his own mind; that he likes to have men and angels pour their thoughts upon him.

Again, no man is prepared to show that there is not some element in the nature of moral government, as related to various worlds, that requires some such mediation as that asserted, but not explained, in the language of the New Testament. There are intimations in the New Testament of a necessity for a mediatorial work between God and man. Whether that necessity is in the divine mind, whether it is in the human mind, or whether it stands connected with the general system of moral government, I do not know. I do not pretend to know where it is. But this, it seems to me, is declared in the New Testament: that it was necessary that one should suffer, and that through suffering one should become a mediator between God and man.

The sufferings and death of Christ were not incidental. They were divinely ordained. There was not only a use in them, but a necessity for them. Not alone is this declared, but it is the great undertone of the New Testament. The fact that man's salvation is through faith in Christ, and that the power of Christ to save men is connected with, or dependent on, his suffering for them, can not be taken away from the New Testament without abstracting its very life. It would be like an organ without diapasons. It would have no bass.

There have been a great many theories on this subject from the days of Origen to our time. It was held by some in the early Church that this whole world had sold itself to the devil, that the devil owned mankind, and that God could not interfere to take them away from the devil without pay-

ing him therefor a fair price, and that he paid him that price in the blood and sufferings of Christ. It was held that there was a fair commercial transaction between God and the devil, by which God acquired a right to the creatures that he had formed. It did not take long to reject that theory with horror.

Then there has been a theory that it was necessary that Christ should suffer in order to fulfill, by a literal equivalent, the threatenings of the law. It has been taught that Christ suffered in his own self the sum total of all the anguish that, had it not been for the atonement, would have belonged to all the individuals of the human race, in time and to eternity. What a superabounding fantasy! What a nightmare of folly! If there had been but a single generation of men, and it had been said that they had sinned, and that, in order that they might be saved, all that they would have suffered had been gathered up and experienced by one mind, we might have paused with some degree of respect. But that the divine nature should go on creating and reproducing men, till from thirty to sixty millions every year are emptied into the world, and until the human understanding is entirely unable to conceive of the infinite numbers of those that are to suffer, and then that it should be said that one mind has suffered all that they would have suffered in the immeasurable round of eternity, shocks those very moral sentiments which Christianity itself has most educated, and to which it always appeals.

But what shall we say when to that is added the stark-mad reasoning that was once promulgated from this desk by another? He said that as man was susceptible of infinite increase in faculty, and went on sinning forever, so he would be punished forever; and that his punishment would be augmented forever, "until," said he, "it is probable that there are single individuals in this congregation who will suffer more in the periods of prospective ages than has been suffered by all the lost and damned in perdition since the beginning of time!" And this monstrous conclusion followed from

a delirious logic based upon a lying premiss. I need not say that this theory is almost universally exploded. *Quantitative* suffering is hardly any more defended.

I do not wish to be understood as holding that Christ did not, *in an appropriate and just sense, bear the punishment of the sins of the world.* What I protest against is the idea that Christ in himself suffered in literal measure every pang that would have been suffered by the whole race forever and forever, in the increasing ratio of their ill desert.

It has been held, farther (and it is the current theory of what are called the New-School theologians, my own brethren in the Congregational order, and men with whom I most sympathize in faith), that the sufferings and death of Christ were necessary in order that God might vindicate his justice before the universe. I do not say that it is not so, but only "How did you find it out?" It may, or it may not be true.

Do you ask me, then, on what ground I put the necessity for the sufferings of Christ? This is my whole faith on this subject: The New Testament teaches that there was a reason which made it necessary that the blood of one should be shed to atone for the sins of men. *The reason is not explained.*

I learn from the New Testament that it was needful that my God in Jesus Christ should suffer for me. I accept the FACT with reverence and gratitude; but I do not seek to know on this point what the New Testament has not explained; and the example of those that have attempted to explain it has left me with less disposition to make the attempt. With reference to the atonement of Christ, I hold that he did make a proper satisfaction for the sins of the world. I do not know how it was that he did it. He knows, and God knows. All I know is the simple announcement that it was done in such a way that God could be just, and the justifier of him that believed.

But there is a part of the atoning work that *is* made known to us, namely, that it manifested God. That is explained, and glowing illustrations of it fill the New Testament.

There are two elements to be considered respecting Christ's suffering. In the first place, I hold in a solemn faith the inexplicable fact that it was necessary, for reasons known to the divine Being (whether it inheres in his own person, in his creatures, or in his government, I know not), that one should suffer for all. Secondly, I hold that the suffering of Christ manifested the mind of God in such a way as to cause it to appear sweet, and blessed, and attractive for evermore.

In the remaining parts of this discourse, based on the intercessorship of Christ as thus explained, I purpose to make some suggestions arising both from our unconscious want and from our conscious necessities.

First, There has been, from the beginning of the world, a steady evolution from the seminal point in individuals and races. Childhood has developed into manhood. There has been going on, since the world began, a continuous education in physical skill, in intellectual endowments, in moral energy, and in æsthetic qualities. And revelation teaches us that this fourfold, complicated education is going on, not only for time, but for eternity.

See how complex a man's education is for time alone. He is being educated for all the relations of life, in the family, in business, in society, in public and private affairs. The rains, the winds, the lightning; every gentle and every rude influence of Nature; the industries of life, the civil structure of society, laws, customs, social conditions—in short, all things in heaven and on earth, are divinely employed as instruments of human culture. And man begins his journey in this world stumbling, and not knowing any thing about what the result is to be, except that there is to be another life, and that, although he sustains special relationships here, he is to live forever and forever in a sphere beyond this. How many things are being done for man which transcend his own recognition—which do not come within the scope of his judgment and choice!

My child's education is in my hands. Looking at his emo-

tive peculiarities, his mirthful tendencies, and his executive capacities, I say, "He should be a speaker;" and, though I say nothing to him about it, I educate him with a view to that end. I give him culture that shall increase his bodily strength, improve his voice, and quicken his imaginative powers. Then I give him other kinds of training which are necessary to the accomplishment of my purpose. And so his education goes on, and he knows nothing of what I am trying to do till he is twenty-one or twenty-two years of age, when he follows out the plan that I have laid down, and educates himself still farther.

Now if there is One that sits in heaven and controls the elements of our being, and holds in his hand the threads of our destiny for time and eternity, as I hold in my hand the threads of my child's destiny so far as his education for the pursuits of this world is concerned, what a glorious office-work must that be which he is carrying on for us! Oh! what joy it brings to me to think that I am not a lonely wanderer trying to find my way; but that the vague and inexplicable yearnings which I have, and which I am following, are the drawing-strings thrown out to lead me by One who knows just what my necessities are, and who stands ready to relieve them all!

My comprehensive idea of mediatorship and intercessorship is this: that there is one who, before God, is my king, my priest, my prophet, my all in all, to do whatever I need to have done, in body or soul, for time and for eternity. If that be the doctrine of Scripture, blessed be God for the enunciation of so glorious a doctrine! The Headship of Christ—I proclaim it! Be thou, Lord Jesus, my head, and let me follow thy beck!

"But," says a man, "do not you open the door to boundless latitude when you say that you do not get a clear understanding of these things?" Some things men learn by their senses, some by reflection; some knowledge is born of the feelings, or comes as moral intuitions. Different natures

employ different faculties by which to help themselves to truth; some employ more imagination, and others, again, emotion rather than imagination. We believe many things which we can not well express in words, and many things which we can not reduce to intellectual formula. Some of the very life-truths—the most constant and nourishing truths—without which we should almost miss our own identity, hover about us as an atmosphere, or rise within as a delicate exhalation, but can not be handled, and refuse to be condensed to words and propositions. They are none the less true. As to the reason of them, I know about as much as leaves know of the reason of their turning toward the sun. At night they are all inclined westward, toward the place where they last saw their hope and joy. And when the sun comes up above the eastern horizon, they turn and lift their faces toward it again. And I know that under certain circumstances of want the soul spontaneously lifts itself up to God. As a child, unknowing, turns to the bosom that feeds it, so my heart and your heart cry out for God. Though I have no clear and distinct conception of the way in which his soul acts upon mine, I am conscious that I am comforted. If in this life we might have no comfort except that which comes from things that we understand perfectly, we should be of all men most miserable.

In the night a child wakes, and, discovering that it is alone, cries out in terror, and the parent goes to it and lifts it up, and brings it to her own couch; and it falls, dreaming, half crying and half smiling, into a sweet slumber by its mother's side. We, at best, like the child in its mother's arms, are not fully awake. We do not know what influences are acting on us, nor much about him that is working in us. All we know is that without God we die, and that when we lift ourselves toward that glorious, and, in this life, uninterpreted and uninterpretable Being, our heart feels the divine power, and rejoices in it. I do not dislike, in its proper place, reason; but reason shall not play despot over the heart.

There is a special need, too, of divine aid and instruction in the moral nature. We have need to be taught constantly what is right, and we have need of increase of moral strength to do according to our knowledge. We need instruction in reference to what are called duties, and we need help to perform that which we know to be duty. In the eighth chapter of Hebrews reference is made to this very thing.

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

We are conscious that we are evolving in this life an education having two parts—first, the augmentation of our positive knowledge of right and wrong; and, secondly, incarnation in our own conduct and dispositions of these ideas of right and wrong. And, as the top of a mountain must always be supplying, from the clouds, the springs that exude from the bottom, so we need perpetually to have our moral conceptions, and our practices under them, inspired by contact and connection with Christ, who is our intercessor and mediator.

Secondly, No one is prepared to say that there are not spiritual conflicts between realms of spirits which render it absolutely necessary that we should have a superhuman guide and leader. We are not the only people that were ever created. The habit of God's mind seems to be to take a germ, one root-idea, and to prove what infinite variations it is susceptible of. Take the root-idea of ferns. In all the varieties of ferns there is a substantial unity, but the ways in which God writes that idea are many. Take an order of birds—for instance, the passeres — as they are scattered all over the

globe, and bring them together, as science is doing; a common type runs through them all, but the fundamental idea is expressed in multifarious forms. The same thing is true of all carnivorous and herbivorous, vertebral and invertebral animals that cover the globe. In the case of no class of them has the root-idea stopped where it began. In each case a unitary thought has been written out in endless variations.

As a theme in music, consisting of a few distinct notes, which are heard plainly at first, when it is elaborated on the organ is only recognized now and then, sometimes as though it were the voice of a bird flying and humming through the air, sometimes as though it were the sound of horns, sometimes as though it were the tone of a sweet flute, and sometimes as though it were all of these combined, but always with variations, so you will find that God, in every department of his creation, though he began with a single thought, in carrying it out evolved endless variations.

The application is this: When we come to man, are we not to suppose that the same thing is true? Is it not reasonable to suppose that the divine creative capacity was not exhausted in making the numerous races of the globe? Are we to suppose that what we see in this world is the sum of the literature which God has produced from the alphabet in which this was written? I do not attempt to prove any thing nor affirm any thing on this point. No one can speak with any certainty concerning it. I present an illustration, and not an analogy. In heaven, in the realms of space, in the infinite abyss of spiritual existence, how many races and kinds of creatures may there not be that have a substantial family likeness? May we not presume that we are in a universe filled with beings varied in nature and disposition beyond any conceptions that we can form? I am not speaking of the malign spirits such as men invented in the periods of Tuscan mythology, nor of the devils and fiends suggested by the grim and ascetic notions of the mediæval monks, nor of the vagaries of imagination with which we so often meet in

modern times; but that there is a universe with intelligences far exceeding in variety those which this world contains I do not think improbable, aside from the light of revelation. And I suggest that if this is a fact, and man, in his moral education, is being hurtled through the myriad kingdoms and empires of air, he needs some one that knows him, and them, and all things, to be perpetually on the alert for him. Do you say that God takes care of us? Why not say that Christ does, inasmuch as he is our highest conception of God? He is the Father incarnated and brought down to us; and why not ascribe the work of watching over us to him, of whom we have clear and definite conceptions, that we may have more benefit from our faith than we can have if we ascribe it to the divine Father?

I will not pursue these suggestions farther. Let me close by speaking of the use and comfort of them.

First, it is a great comfort, or should be, that the heavenly land is not a strange land, into which we are to emigrate, neither known nor knowing. Having lived much in the West, I have seen many emigrants arrive there, who, on account of poverty or misfortune, or from the hope of bettering their already comfortable circumstances, were in search of homes in that region; and I have seen them huddled on the thoroughfares in bleak weather, strangers among strangers, and I have thought that their reception must have made their new home most dismal. If dying was to be thrust out of life, and to emigrate to a land where we have no friends, where there are none that know us, and where we know none, it would be a sad thing indeed. But if our names are known in heaven; if they are written in the Lamb's book of life; and if Jesus Christ has ever been our Head, our Leader, our Mediator, administering in our behalf, and preparing a place for us, that where he is there we may be also, then heaven will be familiar to us, and dying will not be so much to be deplored. After this life is over, heaven will seem to us like home. Already it begins to draw us. Our losses fly

up there and become riches. If the cage-door lets out our warbler, the woods get him, even if we lose him. We hear him singing afar, even if he will not return to our hand. So we give to heavenly fields what we lose from earth! And the belief that in heaven our fathers have long dwelt, that we are going there, and that our names are there known and affectionately called, is comforting indeed.

You can not find in the New Testament any of those hateful representations of dying which men have invented, by which death is portrayed as a ghastly skeleton with a scythe, or something equally revolting. The figures by which death is represented in the New Testament are very different. There are two of them which I think to be exquisitely beautiful. One is that of *falling asleep in Jesus.* When a little child has played all day long, and become tired out, and the twilight has sent it in weariness to its mother's knee, where it thinks it has come for more excitement, then, almost in the midst of its frolicking, and not knowing what influence is creeping over it, it falls back in the mother's arms, and nestles close to the sweetest and softest couch that ever cheek pressed, and, with lengthening breath, sleeps; and she smiles and is glad, and sits humming unheard joy over its head.

So we fall asleep in Jesus. We have played long enough at the games of life, and at last we feel the approach of death. We are tired out, and we lay our head back on the bosom of Christ and quietly fall asleep.

The second representation is that death is but a going *home.* A child is away at school, and the vacation is near at hand; and you may be sure that the father and mother long to see the child more than the child wants to see father and mother. So, according to the good old custom, the father takes the carriage and wends his way to the school, perhaps with, perhaps without intimations to the child of his coming. In the midst of his tasks on the last day, the child is suddenly greeted by the voice and presence of his father;

and no sooner are the first salutations exchanged than the father says, "Are your things ready? we go to-morrow." Wine is not so sparkling as the joy in the child's heart! He can neither eat, nor sleep, nor play. The thought that his father has come, and that he is going home to see his mother, and brothers, and sisters, has quite intoxicated him.

By such glorious images as this God is pleased to represent our departure from the present life. The Lord Jesus Christ shall come to our poor old weather-stained schoolhouse in this world, and say to us, "Come home! you are wanted."

Heaven is not, then, a great bleak shore to which you are driven by the storm, and where you are cast among savage inhabitants. Heaven is a blessed place of rest. It is your home. You have friends there, the chiefest among whom is he that loved you, that gave himself for you, that has ever watched over you during your earthly pilgrimage, and that soon, very soon, will come for you, as already he has for yours. They are glorious there; and in all their glory, if they could but speak a word to us, would it be such a poor stumbling word as that which they spoke in the hour of death? If they could speak to us from the eternal world, what hope and consolation would they give us!

That is one comfort, then, of this mediatorship of Christ. He has made heaven our home. It is his house, and we are his children, and he loves to bring us there, and he will very soon do it.

Next, we may take comfort and consolation from Christ's intercessorship in reference to our earthly affairs. I speak that which I do know, and testify that which I have felt and understood in my heart. Indulge me a moment, brethren, for your own profit. I am as sensitive to praise and blame, to right and wrong, to pain and pleasure, it seems to me, as the mercury is to the atmosphere; and I have been placed for years in a situation in which almost every thing that would tend to excite, and annoy, and distress a person, has

been brought to bear upon me; and yet I do not believe there has been a man in your acquaintance that in the main has been more happy and contented than I have been. It has not been owing to my disposition, for that is tumultuous and changing. What, then, has been the cause of it? I bear witness, to the honor of God and to your comfort, that it has been a constant faith that in human affairs there is the presence and mediation of my Savior God. It has been a sense of Christ present in every thing, thinking for me, feeling for me, and arranging for me. When I have been tossed about on the sea of life like a ship that, on angry waves, is made to careen till it shows its very keel, the first impinging may perhaps have caused excitement, but the second thought has been, "It is all right; every thing is happening right."

I look back upon a life whose thwartings were my gains. My best successes have been disappointments. I should have been damaged, perhaps ruined, had I gained what I vehemently strove for. Sorrows that I shunned and joys that I sought changed places, and pain became pleasure, and grief gladness! My God has been to me a friend—more than any human friend, and he has done for me exceeding abundantly more than I asked or thought. I can only say that it is wonderful—the kindness, the gentleness, the wisdom that have been exercised toward me by my Savior in the administration of human affairs. And now, for the time to come, shall I refuse to let him take care of my concerns? Shall I no longer trust in him who has so long been to me a faithful friend? My oldest son is in the army, and shall I read, with trembling anxiety, the account of every battle, to see if he is slain? I gave him to the Lord; I shall not take him back, and I will not worry and fret myself about him. I will trust in God, though he slay not only him, but me also. And my all I have put on the same ground—at least I tried to; sometimes not succeeding, and sometimes succeeding a little. My God—this Christ Im-

manuel—God with me—has sustained and comforted me in care and trouble, and taken away my fear, and put hope in its place, and I will look to him still. If there are any here that have carried burdens, and whose faces are wrinkled with care, I beseech you to try living by faith in a present Savior that loves you, and ordains all things, and says that every thing shall work for your good if you love God.

Only one word more. There are two ways of looking at every trial, every lonesomeness, every wasting grief. The one is the besotted way, the earthly way, in which you weigh your trouble; in which you measure it; in which you wear it like a girdle; in which you let it work upon your feelings, and make you selfish; in which you let it unman you, and cause you to bear false witness against the Savior and his Gospel. The other is the Christian way, by which you look up the moment trouble comes upon you.

Do you say, "I do not know how to find the way?" He came to seek and save just such as you. Do you say, "I am not worthy to carry my affairs to God?" No, you are not; God would not be the Being that he is if he were not adapted to take persons that are not worthy to come to him. It is peculiarly the glory of God that he does not choose companions, and those that are like himself, but that he accepts all just as they are.

Now if you do not need God, do not come to him. But if you are in trouble of body or soul; if the things on which you have leaned have broken; if you want some one to comfort and sustain you, then come to him. Do you find the world to be enough? Have your dreams been realized? Have you accomplished all the things that you meant to do, so that you can look back upon your life complacently? Or do you find marks of age and signs of limitation in yourself, and a sad undertone flowing through your mind, together with influences, and yearnings, and longings which call you up to God? You do not know what beneficence there is in the bosom of Christ for you. I preach again to you the lov-

ing Savior, the sympathizing Savior, the all-pervading Savior, the ever-living Savior, who, having felt your mortal lot, and borne the strokes of your punishment, stands at the summit and source of all power, that he may be the Head of the Church, and your Guide, and the Captain of your salvation. Trust him.

VI.

Love, the Fulfilling of the Law.

Preached Sabbath morning, August 7th, 1859, in the Old-School Presbyterian Church in Peekskill, N. Y. It is inserted here as affording, more comprehensively, perhaps, than any other sermon of Mr. Beecher's, a general view of the nature of true religion, as founded in love.

Love, the Fulfilling of the Law.

"But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."—Matt., xxii., 34–40.

In this brief word Christ has drawn away the veil from the heart of God, and let us see its very central secret. It is *love.*

The most wonderful work of art in all ages, doubtless, was that of Phidias—the famous Jupiter. No artist has ever equaled Phidias; probably none ever will; for we shall probably never have an age again whose deepest life will be expressed by the instrumentality of art, and only such ages can produce such artists as Greece had before Christ, and Italy afterward. This wonderful statue of Jupiter which Phidias made was wrought of ivory and of gold. It was a carved figure sitting upon a throne with majestic air, holding in its left hand a statue of Victory, and in its right hand the sceptre of empire. So vast was this extraordinary work, that, sitting in the chair of state, it still towered forty feet in height. Into no other figure and face had art ever thrown such astonishing majesty. Men made pilgrimages to see it. He was counted happy who had seen, and he was counted unfortunate who died without seeing, the Phidian Jupiter. It was placed at the end of the temple; and historians say that if it had risen up it would have carried away the roof and the

ceiling with it, so tall was it. Before it was stretched a purple curtain to hide it from common observation; but on appointed festival days the crowds of citizens—excited by an uninstructed religious fervor, wild with exhilarating dances, odorous with the fragrance of costly perfumes through whose smoke they passed, as censers and altars shed them forth at every corner, and in multitudes along every square—drew near to the temple; and now, when sacrifices were made, and the vast throng were hushed with silent expectation, at a signal the priests drew back the purple curtain, and the vast statue, white as snow and yellow as gold, shone forth with such amazing lustre that the crowd were subdued to tears; some fainted, some were caught into a nervous furor that was counted an inspiration; and not one was there among them who, for the moment, doubted the reality of the divine Olympian Jupiter.

And yet this was a statue that spoke not a word. No heart throbbed there. No light waked in those eyes. It was a mere idol, that thought not, moved not, felt not, but sat silent amid ages—silent as the elements of which it was made—the cast-off trunk of elephants in African forests—silent as gold buried in the mountains. Not one of all that throng but had more life, more intelligence, more scope and magnitude of existence than that majestic lie before which they cast themselves down, the slaves of their own imaginations!

No carved stone, no ivory and gold, have ever sought to express the majesty of Jehovah. These things were good enough for Jupiter; they were unfit for Jehovah. From the beginning, the Hebrew mind could find nothing on earth—not even in the framework of the globe itself—to represent their conception of Jehovah. The morning light was but the golden fringe of his garments. Not even the locks of his hair were to be so likened. His slightest look they called lightning. His lowest tones were sonorous bolts of resounding storms. And when the mightiest rendings of nature were

ended, there came forth a prompting voice, saying, "These are parts of his ways, but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

God is a spirit. Mortal eye can not behold him. Were God to appear corporeally, it could not be God, but only a representative form. He is to be known spiritually; that is, by thought and by feeling—not by eyesight, but by insight of heart. In this manner Christ, in the words of our text, drew back the veil from Jehovah, and disclosed this God of love! He drew back the veil from the counsels of his heart, and revealed *love* as the secret of his wisdom, the end of his thought, the genius of the divine disposition. He drew back the veil from Time itself, and revealed the workings of history, and made known to us that to secure the dispositions of love all those events and arrangements were framed which occupied the first four thousand years of the world, and whose outlines constitute the Old Testament. He drew back the veil from the future, and revealed to us that this same central element is to be the fulfilling of the law in ages to come. And since the days of Christ, the divine Helmsman has been steering the ship of human affairs right toward this light-house of the universe—*Love;* for such do I suppose to be the unrolled and interpreted meaning of the words, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." All that was recorded in the past or foreseen in the future pivoted on this one golden centre—*Love.*

If men do not understand what God expects of them, it is not for want of explicit teaching. Words can not be plainer, nor are they contradicted by cross-passages that obscure the meaning. The whole New Testament is uniformly consistent in declaring love to be the whole duty of man.

The human mind is a kingdom of powers or faculties which are very different one from another, but which may be made perfectly to harmonize. When they are influenced aright, they, like the instruments of a band of music, blend and enrich each other; but when they disagree, they clash,

and, as with an ill-assorted orchestra, though each instrument be good, the whole effect is discordant and detestable.

Now how shall a man carry his mind at peace with itself —in co-operative harmony? How shall he carry himself in harmony with his fellows? How shall he discharge his duty, in short, to God, to men, and to himself? Is there any royal road to this? There are a great many ways in which men affect to discharge this duty, according to the different ideas entertained by different individuals in respect to what constitutes right living. One man says that we ought to be governed by reason in all things, and that where men *are* governed by reason they will live as well as they can be expected to live in this world. Another man thinks that we ought to be just. He looks upon conscience as the governing element of a well-ordered life, and says, "If men were only just, how perfectly would they live!" Another man regards worship as the controlling principle of our conduct in life, and says, "He that reveres God, and walks humbly before him, can scarcely go astray." Another man believes honesty and industry to be the prime characteristics of right living, and says, "He is sufficiently good who is both honest and industrious." Another man esteems good citizenship to be the most essential quality of human conduct. But, high above all these, the voice of God says, "*Love* is the fulfilling of the law;" and he who wishes to know how to carry his mind aright must learn the philosophy of love. He who wishes to know how to shape his life aright among his fellow-men must learn the way of love. There is but one pilot from the cradle to the grave—there is but one pilot from this world to the eternal sphere—and his name is LOVE. He never steers the ship upon the rocks, and no other pilot ever carried it through the voyage of life unwrecked.

I propose this morning, first, to examine what is the indisputable testimony of Scripture on this doctrine of love; secondly, to ask what is included in this feeling; thirdly, to inquire what is the condition in which it is to exist in us; and

fourthly, to consider its relations to the work of Christianity in the individual and in the world at large, and the methods of obtaining and cultivating it.

First, look to the testimony of the Bible to see whether I am right in saying that the great controlling influence of religious life is to be love to God and to man. Recall the words of our Savior in the text:

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

The law and the prophets are nothing without love; this is the sum, and includes them all. Listen to the testimony of the apostle in the 9th and 10th verses of the 13th chapter of Romans:

"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law"—the complete obedience of it.

Listen again to the words of the apostle as expressed in the 13th and 14th verses of the 5th chapter of Galatians:

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

"This is the message," says John, "that ye heard from the beginning." There never has been any other testimony, *i. e.*, but this. What is it? "That we should love one another." This is the great message to man. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." This quality of love is the very evidence that we are Chris-

tians. And again, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us."

There are a great many people that have plenty of evidences of religion, but none of love, which goes to show that a man may have religion without being a Christian. There is many a man that worships whose worship is devoid of the important element of love to man. It is only those who love all men that are true followers of Christ.

We perceive, then, that love, according to the plain interpretation of Scripture, is put as a universal duty. It is the criterion and evidence of a regenerated state. It is the test of God's indwelling in the soul. It is the end to which life should tend. It is the design and fulfillment of God's law.

Now of no other feeling have such things been said in Scripture. It is that for which the law was put over us; it is all that the law requires of us. If a man will fulfill this simple requirement of the law—not, perhaps, according to his meagre understanding of it, but as Scripture interprets it—he need not trouble himself about any thing else. If you will strike for that central disposition, every thing else will follow of its own self.

Thousands are anxious to know how to be Christians, how to live happily and to die safely. They have rejected this plain teaching of Scripture, or changed it into something else, they know not what, so that they are in doubt as to what is the true Christian course. They say, "If there was a plain line of conduct marked out which I could understand, and which I could see before me as plainly as I see the path in which I tread, I would gladly follow it, and be a Christian." Here is such a line of conduct marked out. There is no other road half so plain as this royal road of God. He has paved it, not with stones, but with gold; and he says to every man, "If you will love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself, there is no other law for you. In doing this you do all that is required of you."

Many people think that living a Christian life is a wonderfully comprehensive thing, and they spend so much time watching their motives and actions that they have little or no time to attend to any thing else. There is but one thing required of man, and that is, that he shall have *love*. If you take care of that, every thing else will take care of itself. There are other feelings and attributes essential to the soul, but these necessarily exist and act where there is love. As in a watch there is a spring, which, if you coil it up, will of itself keep all the wheels in motion, so there is in the human soul a spring which, if you wind it up, will uncoil itself, and carry forward every thing related to your duties and conduct in this world. Do I exaggerate, then, the importance of this emotion? Does not Scripture rank it as the chiefest among all the Christian states? Must not all other assumed tests of religion give place to this?

Secondly, let us look at the inquiry, What is included in this love? What does it mean? God has made in the human soul a threefold provision for the exercise of affection. The first is love, which takes hold of youth, and infancy, and weakness, and which is peculiarly designed to meet the exigency of birth and childhood. No other form of love can meet that want so well as the instinct of maternal love. Benevolence is too vague, and affection too exacting. The patience, the watchfulness, and the tenderness required for helpless infancy must have a special instinct scarcely at all depending upon reflection. This is given to all animals. It inspires gentleness in the lioness and the tigress. The she-wolf licks her whelps with loving, amiable kindness, and seems half human.

The second form of love is higher and wider than maternal love. It may be denominated personal affection. It is that love which exists between two persons of congenial disposition. It depends upon character—upon the perception of some supposed attractive element of mind. It is individual, having usually, in each case, but a single object. But, though

it is a glorious attribute, unknown in the brute creation below us, it is limited. It may exist in men without very high moral quality. Indeed, there are very many exceedingly selfish persons that love intensely; and love itself may be the highest form of selfishness, as when it exists between two individuals merely conscious of the admiration and of the pleasure which they afford to each other.

The third and highest form of love is that disposition which is usually called benevolence, and which consists in good-will, a spirit of active kindness, and affection to all men, without regard to their character. Ordinary affection takes heed to character, and we love men in proportion as they come up to our ideas of human life; but benevolence, although it regards character, and delights to see right living among men, yet exercises itself more intensely toward the weak, and ignorant, and sinful, than toward the strong, and intelligent, and good.

If I go out to seek companionship for life, or for a journey, or a voyage, I avoid persons of ill temper, persons who are ignorant, persons whose dispositions are uncongenial to me. I seek some one who is kind, who is intelligent, whose traits all play sweetly, like summer, on my disposition. When I find such a man, I select him for his good qualities, and the pleasurable effects he is calculated to produce upon me. When I go out seeking to do good, I do not look for men that are already good, but for those who are out of the way. If I went forth in New York to do good to the children in the streets, I should not turn my attention to those clad in silk dresses, with clean faces, that had just come from well-to-do, intelligent, and cleanly parents, and that seemed comfortable and happy. I should say, "They are well enough provided for already." I should go past them, although in going past them I might look lovingly upon them. I should direct my attention to the children that were meanly clad and unwashed, that had come from poor and negligent parents, or that had no parents at all; and I should say,

"Here are the ones that need me." I should select these, not because they were so good, but because they were so bad. If I sought a child to carry in my bosom, I should seek one with a sweet disposition, and that had been well reared; but if, in a spirit of benevolence, I sought a child that I might do it good, I should seek one that was uncared for, and I should feel that the lower and the worse it was, the more it needed me. Personal love always works upward; but benevolence, or that love which is characterized by good-will and compassion, works also downward. There is nothing else like this benevolence. In the mind there is no analogy for it. There is no evidence that any other feeling was ever meant to have such breadth, variety, and universal function as this has.

To these three forms of affection I must not fail to add a capacity for a higher love than this social faculty, by which we are able to develop out of ourselves a true love for that which is invisible, supreme and perfect—the ideal religious love. This is given us that we may find our way up to God, whom we have not seen, with love and trust. This capacity, and the three kinds of affection which I have just described, form the constitutional elements in the soul by which we are to love. Now it is the whole of this nature which God designs to have developed and made superior in us, in power, predominance, and activity, to all other things; but the leading element is to be diffusive, universal benevolence. This is the element which is to exert the greatest influence over our conduct. The man who is properly influenced by it habitually performs generous deeds, is filled with feelings of kindness, and longs for the good of others. It may, in individual instances, take on the form of personal affection, and manifest itself in feelings of compassion and pity; but it consists in that whole, large, round, comprehensive mood of mind, which includes all kind feeling and well-wishing toward men.

Thirdly, what is the condition in which this state of mind

is to exist? We are conscious that our feelings exist in a twofold way—first, as impulses, and, second, as dispositions; and it is important to discriminate between these. The former are occasional, the latter are permanent. The former are single acts, the latter are states in which our faculties abide. The former send a flash through the mind, the latter abide as an atmosphere. Now in which of these two ways is love to exist in the mind? Is it to be an occasional emotion or an abiding state?

We shall, by turning a moment aside, and examining the way in which the mind loves, come to a better understanding of what we mean by a state, or atmosphere, or disposition, in distinction from occasional and special impulse.

There is in every man a capacity, under certain circumstances, of using every faculty he has; but there is some faculty, or some class or combination of faculties, in each man, in which his life tends to abide; and when he is moved out of it, he tends to settle back to it. He finds his natural equilibrium and rest in it. That is what we mean when we say a man has a *disposition*. When a man has certain traits which constitute the leading features of his character, we call those traits his disposition. Thus there are some men that live in their thoughts. They are dry every where except in their intellect, but there they are juicy. You may, by placing a special motive before their mind, wake up some strong feeling in them, but, like dew on grass, it soon passes away. No sooner is this motive removed than they relapse into their ordinary state. They have a meditative, reflective, perceiving mind, but are not men of much emotion.

There are other men who live in the imagination. They dream all their life long. On a special impulse they open their eyes, and see things as they are; but the moment the hard, practical necessity which disturbs them has given way, and they are at liberty to do what they love to do best, back they sink into day-dreams. That is their disposition. They are natural dreamers.

There are others who live wholly in their feelings. They can, by effort, go out into the realm of thought, but they are emotive in their nature. Round and full they are with heart-sap. Sometimes they study, and sometimes they reason with considerable difficulty; but the moment the motive to mental effort is removed, back they sink into their affectional life, where they feel at ease, and where every thing is bright and rosy as the morning sun. Such is their disposition.

Life is full of other examples of the peculiar dispositions of men. Some men are habitually in a state of industry. They are idle sometimes, but idleness with them is special—it is the exception. Industry is their abiding state. They even begrudge themselves their sleep. They are restless night and day. Some men are habitually indolent. They will rouse up under some necessity or pressure, and may be pushed into industry; but oh! how glad they are when the necessity or pressure ceases. Some men are habitually in a state of good-nature. Once in a while they get vexed, and exhibit ill-natured feelings, and then every body talks about them, saying, "I saw him angry once." Others are almost always peevish; but now and then they manifest mild feelings, and you hear people say of them, "I recollect once to have seen him good-natured." Some men are irritable, morose, disagreeable. They are unhappy themselves, and they make others unhappy. That is their general state; but sometimes they rise into the opposite state for a short period.

You are familiar with the fact that men who are ordinarily courageous sometimes become cowards for a moment, but suddenly fly back, like a spring, to their former condition. Courage is their natural state. You are also familiar with the fact that men who are ordinarily cowards occasionally become courageous; but their natural state is timidity. So in respect to refinements; some men live in them. They appreciate that which is fine and beautiful, and they seek it, and are unhappy without it. They may at times become

coarse and rude, but it is not natural to them to be so. Others are habitually gross and vulgar. They may occasionally be elevated into a state of nobleness, and purity, and refinement, and good taste, but this is not their ordinary state.

We see the same thing in business life. Some men are habitually humble and generous. It is their tendency to be so, if they are let alone. They occasionally get out of this state. Sometimes emergencies take them off their guard, and cause them to depart from their usual mood; but this is not common with them. On the other hand, many men are crabbed, and knavish, and selfish, and hard, and ugly. They surprise every body, once in a while, by doing a good and generous deed, and by manifesting a sweet temper; but this state, in their case, is only temporary.

These are illustrations drawn from common life, since I am speaking to the common people, to show what I mean by a state or disposition, in distinction from a special volition. And the question is this: What is the command of God in respect to the matter of love? Is it to be an occasional impulse? Are we, when the Sabbath day comes, to take out our heart, and select from it love as an arrow, and let it fly at the target in the sanctuary, and say, "There, my shaft has sped; I have done my duty to-day;" or is it to be the continual experience of our life? Is it to be an impulse provoked by occasion and necessity? or is it to be an abiding state lying behind all the activities of our nature, propelling and directing them? Love is to take precedence of all our other feelings. It is to be the chief element of our life. It is to be our meat and drink. The great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and"—there is not a great gulf between the two parts, but only room to take breath—"and thy neighbor as thyself." They come together as twins. And this is to be the power and scope of the love we are to have; it is to be a love that fills the head, and the heart, and the nature, and

the life. I do not mean to say that a man can not be a Christian unless he is perfected in love; but I do mean to say that the ideal of a Christian life includes a heart whose supreme purpose is love—whose chief aim is to develop itself according to the divine law of love toward God and man. Thus much, then, as to the nature of this feeling, and as to the condition in which it must exist.

Fourthly, I am to ask your attention to the relations of this disposition of love to the work of Christianity in the individual and in the world. This disposition of love being that which comprehends and measures all other qualities, so it is the atmosphere in which all other qualities ripen, and in which only are they perfect. Love is itself a perfect thing. No other feeling is. Each feeling of our nature must be gilded by it before it has its proper hue and quality. The relation of this disposition of love, then, to the understanding of God will claim our first attention.

We understand God by something developed in ourselves that is like him. We know of God only so much as we imitate or feel. If you take any disposition, if you go out with it into life, and if you, in your sphere, act as God would act, then you become, in your measure, acquainted with the very things that are revealed of him. God is revealed to us by being revealed in us, as when, in the power of his spirit, the heart feels as he feels. Thus by our experience we know something of the interior nature of God. It is not, therefore, by stress of thinking that men discover God. Neither do they discover him by potency of petitions in prayer. We discover God by the reproduction of him in ourselves—by shaping in ourselves something that is like him. Hence Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is only by being pure that you can see him. Prayers for Christian graces, therefore, are usually answered, if at all, through long evolving processes of life. When we ask God to reveal himself to us, let us not look up, and fix our eyes on the clouds, hoping that we may behold him with

our outward vision. The body will never see God. We are to see him by our dispositions, by our affections. Let those who have tried in vain to find out more of his character from the Bible, and who have tried in vain to find out more of his character in the closet, not study the Bible less, nor visit the closet less, but let them do that which is to interpret the one, and give benefit to the other—let them undertake to experience in their own hearts those qualities for which they search and supplicate, and they shall find a better commentary than was ever written. Try to live right. God's nature interprets what our nature is to be. We are to carry ourselves toward all men in such a way that we shall love them and wish them well—toward *all* men; not merely toward our friends, not toward the noble and excellent alone, but also toward the poor, toward the rude, toward the vulgar, toward the child, toward the man, toward the stranger, toward the white, toward the black, toward every human being that God has created, toward every sentient creature that is conscious of happiness, and that is capable of being improved and made better. You are to carry your mind in such a state toward them that you will not only wish them well, but will desire to confer blessings upon them. When a man stands so suffused with this disposition that every day and hour his heart is filled with yearning feelings of goodwill toward his fellow-men, he is, in some measure, in that abiding state in which God dwells.

What are called Christian graces must be interpreted from this stand-point. Gentleness, peace, joy, patience, self-denial, hope—all these are the products of love. They are but this feeling of love evolved in different ways. There are two methods of seeking these things. One is to let life flow on as it chooses, making special spiritual efforts, however, to obtain each of them. Some men think it is their duty to put on Christian graces. They read about them, and pray for them. They desire meekness. They look in the commentary to see what meekness means, and they ask God for it,

and hope it will come to them. They seem to think that in some mysterious way he will drop the graces which they seek from heaven upon them; that he will place them as jewels on their spiritual hand. And is it by virtue of prayer alone that you hope to obtain Christian graces? I do not wish to undervalue the power of prayer, but if prayer is answered at all, it is answered, not in the closet, but in the life. If God gives to man the graces of the Spirit, he gives them to him by augmenting his love; and when a man prays for Christian graces, let him pray that he may have a larger measure of this disposition. If a man desiring Christian graces goes forth with love and gentleness among his fellowmen, and is willing to make sacrifices for their well-being, and counts his life rich in proportion as he is able to do good to others, and says, "I make myself the servant of all for Christ's sake"—if a man seeks Christian graces in that way, he shall find that the reproduction of love in his soul is fruitful of all that he seeks.

It is wonderful that we do not take a hint in this matter from the fact that, in secular life, when we seek favors at the hands of men, we endeavor to bring them into a good-natured state. We know that when a man is benevolent and sympathetic, he is in the state in which we can draw more good things from him than when he is in any other state. If we go to one for some kindness, we do not go to him on those days when he is gloomy, when his nerves are shaken, when his health is suffering, and when his business is going wrong; we go to him when he is full-fed, and comfortable, and genial, as it is at such times that he is most likely to grant our request. We bring him into a good condition with himself; and when his mind is in a high and summery mood, we let out our little secret with a reasonable hope of success. This is the worldly way of dealing with men when we would have them yield to our wishes. When men wish to grow in Christian graces they must lift their souls up into the atmosphere of divine benevolence, and out of real, pure ge-

nial love all Christian graces will flow most easily and naturally!

2. I remark again upon the relation of this disposition of love to the performance of duties. Those duties which are impelled by fear are always caustic, and those duties which are impelled by conscience are usually hard, but those duties which spring from love are always easy. Hence Christ says, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Look at the way in which a slave bears the burden put upon him. It is fear that drives him to bear them, and consequently they are heavy. If you look at men who carry the burdens of pride, and avarice, and selfishness, you will find that their faces are never handsome. Their passions plow deep furrows on their brows. The lower faculties of such men work painfully. And if you look at those men who do what they do conscientiously—not because they love to do it, but because they have what is called a "sense of responsibility"—you will find that they carry their duties as heavy burdens. There are duties, I am aware, that are impelled by conscientiousness, which I do not wish to decry; but there are a great many men who live in bondage through fear of death. It is their duty to pray, and so they pray; it is their duty to read, and so they read; it is their duty to work, and so they work. It is better that they should do these things from this motive than that they should not do them at all, but it would be much better still if they would do them from the motive of love. If you wish to go from one side to the other of a steep, high hill, and there is a road through it, how much better it is to take that road than to climb over the top of the hill. Now there is such a road as this to the performance of duties, and that is the road of love. If a man does the things that he has to do in any other spirit than that of love, they are irksome tasks; but if he does them in a spirit of love, how his face laughs! how his hand tingles! how radiant is every part of his life!

If one were sent to take care of the poor, miserable, wound-

ed soldiers lying in the plague-stricken hospitals on the plain of Solferino, he would say to himself, "Money would not hire me to do it, but I must do it because it is my duty. Here are men who are suffering and need attention, and I am bound to look after their wants." But let me find my own son among those unfortunate creatures, and, no matter how loathsome might be the offices to be performed toward him, could money buy from me the privilege of ministering to his necessities? Could any motive induce me to leave his side day or night? That which I should do in the one case through conscientiousness, or from a sense of duty, and which would be a disagreeable task, I should do in the other case through love, and it would then be a pleasure to me. I should do it with delight. There would not be hours enough in which I might serve in love my wounded son.

Think of the things a mother does for her child. She gives it her life. She can not serve it enough. To her there is nothing but "My babe." It is her joy, her pleasure, night and day. There are offices that she has to perform toward it that are disagreeable for the moment, but her love for it enables her to perform them with willingness, and to forget all connected with them which is unpleasant. And thus are fulfilled the words of Christ when he says "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Not that the things which you do from love are not sometimes hard, but there is a way in which you can engineer hard things and make them seem easy. Love, and love enough, and your burdens will not seem heavy. Love is able to steer you over all difficulty. Employ it, and it will carry you through life with power adequate to your exigencies. He that knows how to love much knows every thing.

I ask your attention also to the relation of this disposition of love to your treatment of your fellow-men. No man can form right moral judgments about his fellow-men until he does it in a spirit of love. So long as you are angry toward a man, your judgment of him can not be right; nor so long

as you are envious toward him, nor so long as you wish to use him for your own selfish purposes. Unless you regard your fellow-men with a spirit of sympathy and kindness, you can not form a judgment of them that is even just. Before you can form a right judgment of a man, you must love him.

Is there a man occupying some public station in life whom you hate? I say to you, "Stop! you do not love him; you can not form a right judgment of him." Is there a man who is under arrest for the commission of some wrong, whom every body is railing against, and in talking about whom every body gets red in the face, yourself among the number? I say to you, "Stop! you do not love him; you are not competent to form a right judgment of him." The moment I find a man that loves him, I hear a different story from that which is told by those that do not love him. You can never form any thing like a right judgment of a man until you can say, "I love him as a brother, fault or no fault, and the judgment I form of him shall be formed in the spirit of love." I would place no confidence in the history of a country written by a man who was prejudiced against that country. I would feel none in the opinion of one sect respecting another sect to which it is opposed. Judgments formed in a spirit of love are worth something; but so long as a man is under the influence of an envious, hating, revengeful spirit, he is unfit to sit on a jury, and he is certainly disqualified to sit on the bench to form judgments about his fellow-men.

Though men are much worse than we think they are, yet they are a great deal better than we think they are. Measured by that standard which God has given us, how wretched they are! but measured by the ordinary standards which the world has set up, there are more good things about them than we are willing to accord to them. We are so selfish that we do not give them credit enough. We are hard and proud. We can not endure the faults of men, and be patient with those faults. We act in a spirit of intolerance. Parents can not endure the faults of their children;

brothers and sisters can not endure each other's faults; teachers can not endure the faults of their scholars; neighbors can not endure the faults of neighbors; workmen in the same shop can not endure one another's faults. Men can not get along peacefully and harmoniously together except where there is this diffusive kindness and benevolence. When we are pervaded with this, we bear each other's burdens joyfully. If you do not love a man you are always aggravating him at a point where he can not bear temptation; but if you do love him, you shield him from temptation. A loving heart is God's shield, and it is the best protection that you can throw about a man. Kindness, which is another word for benevolence, is indispensable to justice. Absolute conscience—conscience taken out of the atmosphere of love—is always hard, always cruel, always unjust. Conscience should never, for one moment, lose sight of love. A judgment formed from any standard except one which measures by sympathetic benevolence is false.

No man can tell another man his faults so as to benefit him unless he loves him. When I hate a man I am unfitted to be a censor or judge. There is always a sharp edge to one's manner when he tells another his faults under such circumstances. This infernal spirit, that takes pleasure in the faults of others, was sharply rebuked by Paul when he uttered the words "Rejoiceth not in iniquity." There are thousands of men that seem to rejoice in nothing else half so much as iniquity. The moment they hear the servant of the devil asking, "Have you heard the news about A and B?" they say, "What is it? Sit down and tell it to me;" and it is so relishable to reveal, and so exquisite to hear that A and B have been doing wrong, and have been found out in that wrong, that they fairly gloat over it! This is the very spirit of the devil himself, and it is the spirit of human society to a great extent. There is a terrible touch and taint of it in almost every heart. It is hateful before God, and should be before men.

The man who has a true Christian spirit never takes delight in the faults of others. It pains him almost as much to see faults in others as to perceive that he has faults himself. Tell me, does it not give you as exquisite pain to discover faults in those you love as to discover them in yourself? Do you not feel that you would give your own body and blood to save them from ruin? So ought you to feel in respect to all your fellow-men. Their burdens should be your burdens, and their sorrows your sorrows. When a man is actuated by this spirit, how easy it is for him to go to others and tell them kindly of their faults, and help them to rid themselves of them! Men usually will bear to be told their faults by a person who has this disposition, but never by a person who has it not.

And that which is true in the family and among men in the world, on this point, is true in the pulpit. I think there is no question but that a minister may speak what he thinks it is necessary to speak. The question is, Can he love enough to be a faithful speaker? A man who, hating sin, is always thinking how hateful it is, is not well adapted to benefit those who are sinful by preaching to them against it. We are commanded to abhor that which is evil, but that is not the whole nor the half of it. We are not only to abhor that which is evil, but we are to love our fellow-men; and a minister must not only abhor evil, but he must love his people, so that when he thunders to them disagreeable truths from the pulpit, he will leave the impression on their mind that he does it because he loves them, that he sympathizes with them, desires to do them good, and is willing, if need be, to suffer for them. Let him do this, and he can say any thing to them that needs to be said. I do not wonder that men do not want a minister to preach disagreeable truths to them out of a heart of coldness, or even of judicial purity. But let him talk to them in a spirit of love, and they will bear a great deal of hard speaking from him. If a man has not this spirit, he had better not be a public teacher, for it is this

alone that can give him that divine power of sympathy which he needs to have for his sinful fellow-men.

I will say, farther, that the disposition of love is to be the stand-point from which we are to judge whether or not we possess the Christian graces. In other words, love is the true and only evidence of piety. There are thousands of persons who long to know whether they are Christians or not. They review their past experience, and say, "I was awakened on such a day. I had a sense of the law of God, and of my own sinfulness under that law. I was in great and dreadful darkness, and suddenly there came to me a revelation of Christ, and I comprehended him by faith, and accepted him as my Savior. Prayer and the Bible became pleasant to me, and I loved to worship. I soon joined the Church, and since then I have tried to lead a life consistent with my profession." They were awakened, their conversion was a real one, as they think, they put their trust in Christ, they joined the Church, and now they say their prayers, and read the Bible, and are trying to keep Sunday—all of which things are right and proper. But if these are their only evidences of piety, they have only the shell, and lack the central element of Christian life. I hear not a word about your having the disposition of love. Have you that? Do your father and mother say of you, "This child, that used to be so wayward and ill-tempered, is now well-behaved and gentle?" Were you accustomed to take advantage of your brothers and sisters, and to clutch from them whatever you could? and do they say of you, "Since my brother and sister have joined the Church, they are changed in disposition from their old selves. Then they were disobliging and selfish, but now they are kind and generous, and manifest a loving spirit?" Do your tenants say, "I should have known that he had become a Christian by the way he collects his rents?" Do your business associates and your neighbors say, "How much more fair and just he is in his dealings than he used to be?" Is your nature, that was once as hard as a granite rock, now

soft and mossy on the surface, so that vegetation might almost grow upon it? It is your *life* that is to determine whether you have the spirit of Christ, and if you have not the spirit of Christ you are none of his. Though you have passed through hell and heaven; though you have been attended by angels in long processions every day since you heard of God; though you have the gift of prophecy, and understand all knowledge; though you have all faith, so that you could remove mountains—if you have not love, these things profit you nothing. When you wish to know whether you are a Christian or not, you must look for evidence of your piety in other things besides the observance of ecclesiastical requirements. I would not undervalue these, but when you substitute them for inward purity I must apprise you of your mistake, for your soul is in peril. If you wish to know whether you are a Christian or not, ask yourself, "What is the nature of my daily conduct? What do my neighbors say of the change that has been wrought in me?" Ask your father and mother, "Do you think I am living in a spirit of love?" Ask your companions—who know your disposition better than you know it yourself—if they think you have changed for the better. Ask your hired man, ask your servants, "Do I fret as much as I used to? Am I as morose as I was? Do I make you as unhappy as I did?" Look about you and see what the fruits of your life are. If you want to know whether there are chestnuts on a tree or not, you look on the ground, and if you find any there, you know that there are more where they came from. Go and see where the fruit of your Christianity is. It is not in your hymns—any body can sing hymns; it is not in your prayers—any man can make prayers; it is not in your hope—who has not a hope of one sort or another? Neither is it in a mere profession. If you are a Christian, it is because the grace of God is given you by the Holy Ghost in the form of love, which works in both directions—Godward and manward. Without this love nobody can be a Christian. To find out whether you have it

or not, you must look into your life, you must examine your conduct, saying to yourself, "Is my temper milder than it used to be? Am I more patient and gentle than I was? Do I throw the mantle of charity over the faults of others? Do I produce the fruit of love? Do I seek others' good, not my own—others' happiness, not solely my own? Am I willing to deny myself for the sake of making others better and happier? And has this tendency become a disposition?" If you can give an affirmative answer to these questions, you have some of the most important evidences that the love of God is increasing and abiding in you.

Let me say here that I hold the want of this central element of Christian love to be the grand reason of the skepticism and infidelity which exist in our time. Suppose I should attempt to persuade a nation that our Indian corn was excellent for food by offering them the cob and husk without the grain? I might insist as strongly as I pleased that it was full of nutriment; but after they had partaken of the cob and husk, supposing them to be the corn, they would declare corn to be innutritious. Now what an ear of corn is without the grain, that Christianity is without kind, genial, sympathetic love. Christianity with this love left out is nothing but cob and husk. When the corn is growing, the cob serves a good purpose as a centre for the grain to form itself upon, and the husk is a grand wrapper for protecting it from the weather while it is yet tender. I do not, therefore, speak against the cob or the husk. I regard them as important inside and outside influences, provided for the ripening of the corn. I do not speak against churches, and "means of grace," and religious institutions, but I do say that churches, and means of grace, and religious institutions, which do not produce love, are mere cob and husk. True Christian love is the grain. That is to be the bread of life. It is that which is to transform man, and lead him, in his treatment of his fellowmen, to imitate him who bowed his majesty, and laid his head

in the grave, giving his life to show his love for us, and to rescue us from eternal death.

Where there is this spirit, it is so lovely that nobody wants to doubt its reality. Where true religion exists, nobody wants to be an infidel. This Christian disposition kills infidelity. Nobody wants to doubt the reality of God's love in the human soul. I would rather have one representative of Christianity to cure infidelity withal than five thousand tracts. Religion is the best cure for the doubt of religion. The reality is the best cure for the disbelief of it. When ministers, and elders, and members of the Church, instead of loving each other, are seen wrangling, and quarreling, and railing at one another; when they exhibit natures as full of selfish passions as a sepulchre is of dust and vermin, it is not to be wondered at that skepticism and infidelity are rife among us, and that men say, "I do not want such a religion as that." Ah! it is not religion, but the want of it, that makes infidels. And when there is a real revival in the Church, and Christians begin to settle their differences, and to show kind feeling toward each other, and to do things which it is hard for the natural man to do; when this transcendent power of love begins to manifest itself in their lives, then people are affected, and say, "There *is* something in religion, after all."

I would give more for one poor woman, whose poverty only makes her laugh and sing; who is contented with her humble lot; who bears her burdens with cheerfulness; who is patient when troubles come upon her; who loves every one, and who, with a kind and genial spirit, goes about doing good, than for all the dissertations on the doctrines of Christianity that could be written, as a means of preventing infidelity. I have seen one such woman, who was worth more than the whole church to which she belonged and its minister put together; and I was the minister, and my church was the church! She lived over a cooper-shop. The floor of her apartment was so rude and open that you could sit there and see what the men were doing below. She had a

sort of fiend for a husband—a rough, brutal shipmaster. She was universally called "Mother." She literally, night and day, went about doing good. I do not suppose all the ministers in the town where she lived carried consolation to so many hearts as she did. If a person was sick or dying, the people in the neighborhood did not think of sending for any one else half so soon as for her. I tell you, there was not much chance for an infidel to make headway there. If I wanted to convince a man of the reality of Christianity, I said nothing about historic evidence; I said, "Don't you believe Mother —— is a Christian?" and that would silence him. Where there is a whole church made up of such Christians as she was, infidelity can not thrive. You need not be afraid of its making its way into such a church. The Word of God stands sure under such circumstances, so that nothing can successfully rise against it.

And now let me say two or three closing words to another part of my audience: Many of you who have been spectators have rejoiced to hear a man talk to churches and to ministers, and tell them their faults. To some of the severer things I have spoken you have said "Amen." When I alluded to the inconsistencies of many professed Christians, you said, "I know that is so." Now you believe in this good-nature, this genial benevolence, this large-hearted generosity, this true love, do you not? Well, do you possess it yourself? Would you dare to let this question be settled by a jury gathered from among those who know you best? Are you living in a state of grace, or a state of love, which is the same thing? You say, "Of course I do not love as I ought to, but then I am not a professor of religion." Whether you are a professor of religion or not has nothing to do with your duty. I am not bound to live better than you simply because I am a professor of religion and you are not. God requires me to do that which is just and right. My obligations are not to the Church, but to God Almighty, and it is the same with you. The responsibility of right conduct is

placed upon every man, whether he is in the Church or out of it. There is not a man in this house that is not bound to exemplify this doctrine of sympathetic love in his daily life. Have you this love? "Well," you say, "not so much of it as I ought to have." But have you it at all? Do you attempt to live by it? God makes it the indispensable duty of every living creature to possess and exercise this disposition; and if you go on, from day to day, without manifesting in your conduct either love to God or love to man, you are living in a state of sin, and need to be converted. "But," you say, "I do not believe in conversion." You believe a man ought to live as well as he can, do you not? Every body believes that. Well, go and live in this state of love. Either you will or you will not. If you do not, do you not need conversion? If you try for the next month, and the next year, to live right, and do not succeed, does not that show that you need some higher power to help you than exists in yourself? Or, if you should go out, and from this moment live a Christian life, and exhibit a loving disposition, would not all your neighbors and acquaintances look at you and say, "What has happened to that man?" If, to-morrow morning, when you go about your business, you should leave behind you all your pride and self-interest, and should show toward every one you meet a genial good-nature, would not men exclaim, "What has happened to our old acquaintance?" In other words, if you should live in a spirit of love to God and love to man, would not every body say of you, "Why, he is converted?" Although you may not believe in conversion, if you live in the spirit of love, you *are* converted. If you do not live in that spirit, you are not converted, but you need to be. When you *are* converted, you will come to believe in the doctrine that there is a work to be done in man's carnal nature, by no less a power than that of God's Spirit, before he can arrive at a state of disinterested benevolence.

There is not a daisy that was not organized to be a daisy, but I should like to see one that did not have the sun to

help it up from the seed! there is not an aster that was not organized to be an aster, but where is there one that grew independent of the sun! What the sun is to flowers, that the Holy Ghost must be to our hearts, if we would be Christians. If there is a man who can be a Christian without the help of God, he has a heart such as I never knew a person to have. I never seek to put down wicked thoughts and incite good ones without feeling that if God does not help me I shall not succeed. And here we come to the very bosom of the truth I am enforcing; for what God commands us to be, that he is himself; and when we need help in our Christian course, he stands ready, of all others, to help us, working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Now, without wishing to deal in mysticism or metaphysical arguments, I have endeavored to set before you the central duty of your life — the marrow of Christian living. Some of you I may never see again. In the providence of God, my residence, at some seasons, will be near you, and I hope to see you often; but there may be some before me whom I shall never meet again till the judgment day. I would not speak words to gratify your curiosity—I would utter words that shall take hold of the very centre of your life, and prepare you, with me, to meet our God. And if, by-and-by, when I stand before my Master, to render an account of my stewardship, you stand awe-stricken by my side, and without God and hope in that tremendous hour, oh! let my skirts be cleared of your guilt! I tell you that unless you are born into Christian love, you can not see the kingdom of God. There is grace to enable us to love every one, and without that grace no man shall see the Lord. Therefore I appeal to you, my brethren, my friends, dearly beloved, though strangers in the flesh—I appeal to you to heed the commandments of God, and when Christ says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself," believe and obey those words. Bind them about

the brow of your memory; live in their sacred presence; let them imbue your soul with their hidden meaning; and so, living in love, as its very child and ward, at last you shall rise into that sphere where love shall be perfected, purified, and perpetual!

VII.

Preaching Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, September 22d, 1861.

Preaching Christ.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor., ii., 1, 2.

The great men of the world are those who discover or apply great truths to the times in which they live, in such a manner as to work effectual reformations of society. A man is great, not by the measure of his faculty, but by the results which he produces in life. Paul was, then, one of the greatest. He was greater than Peter, than John, than any since the days of Moses. Moses and Paul may be said to have formed the religious ages of the old and of the new dispensations. Moses framed the civil and ethical truths into institutions. David added the poetic and lyric element. Paul gave to his age the great organizing truths, and furnished in his own conduct an example of how to employ them. John added the interior reflective, sentimental element. And so John was to Paul what David was to Moses.

It is more than a matter of curiosity, when a man has been raised up of God to do great things, to have him give a view of his own life, its aims and methods. Paul here sounds the key-note of his life and course. "I, brethren, when I came to you (he had been with them, and gone away again; and now he was writing in retrospect, and disclosing what was the secret of his career), came not with excellency of speech (with rhetorical power, and force of eloquence), or of wisdom (I was not a dialectician, nor a philosopher, a lover of learning, so called), declaring unto you the testimony

of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He did not come relying for success upon fancy, upon a sense of the beautiful as employed in rhetoric, nor upon intellectual forces.

You will take notice, in all the preceding chapter and in this, that it is not Christ, but Christ *crucified*, Christ with his cross, that was the essential qualifying particular. The bruised, the broken Christ was that which he was determined to know.

He did not mean, then, to be a skirmisher, nor an elegant trifler. He did not propose to be a routinist, either through ceremonies or dialectics. The work which opened before the mind of the apostle was so radical and profound that he was from the beginning conscious that nothing but the very influence of God himself, and the infinite truths revealed in Christ, could effect it. He says, "What I had to do could not be done by mere eloquence and beauty of expression. I might have charmed by rhetorical flourishes, but they would not have changed the individual. I might have recited poetry, but passion is never extinguished by poetry. That which I had before me demanded something more than mere reasoning upon propositions. I could have instructed the understanding, but that would not have done the work that I was sent to do, namely, the work of changing the heart." For it was his business to work a thorough change of disposition, of life, and of character in the individual men that came under his influence. And it was his purpose, prophetically discerned, no doubt, in families and neighborhoods to lay the foundation for the renovation of society itself, so that all the institutions of the world should at last come to stand upon new and religious bases. What could be greater than this work? It was to be done, not by intellectual force, by philosophy, by doctrine, by right statements of facts or reasonings, by the play of fancy, nor by any amusements or tragic representations.

Many things were going on in the age of the apostle for

the renovation, or rather the restraint of men's passions. It is not correct to suppose that only after Christ came was any attempt made to benefit men. Great efforts for the right culture of men were made before the Advent. But it was a work imperfectly understood—that society, that classes of men were to be educated. Even in Grecian cities there was some good. In the school of philosophy, and in the various other schools, there were noble natures that were laboring for the elevation of men. Even in the Epicurean—which is esteemed the lowest—there were elements that yearned after and pointed toward goodness. The Sophists were not wholly foolish and trivial. There were many things, also, on the stage and in scenic representations that sought to do good. In barbaric ages, when men learn mostly through the senses, even the stage may conduce to good morals; but society must be very low where the theatre can be made effectual for its elevation.

And so, in the days of the apostle, there were men that satirized vices, and represented evil in its hideous guises. There were the temples of the various deities, and the various observances of religion, which, though they may have sprung from wrong notions of God, and though they were utterly inadequate as a religious system, were of some benefit; for he must be bold and ignorant who would say that all these things had no benefits in them. But yet bolder and more ignorant must he be who would say that Sophists, the drama, and the heathen ceremonials were sufficient to lift men above their passions, exalt nations, and to do that for civilization which has been done by Christianity.

Paul set himself free from all these things, and declared what was the power by which he hoped to achieve his work. He did not declare that he meant to exclude from consideration every thing that related to secular topics. His declaration had nothing to do with the *topics* on which he would speak. His whole course negatives the idea that he meant to preach on no other subject except Christ and him cruci-

fied; for there never was a man that discoursed on a greater variety of topics than he did. Many persons suppose that this was the spirit of the declaration: "When I came among you, I determined to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ in every sermon, on every occasion, always and every where." Many persons have attempted to copy this misinterpreted example of the apostle. It is recounted by a distinguished preacher that his mother made him promise that he would never preach a sermon from which a soul, that never was to hear another sermon, could not derive an idea of the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ. I can scarcely conceive any thing more shallow than to tie a man up to such an idea of preaching that in every sermon, whether it be on profane swearing, Sabbath-breaking, or neglect in paying debts, he must, at the close, drag in a formula of salvation by Jesus Christ. What a conception of religious instruction is that which leads one to suppose that every sermon should have such a termination! It has no justification in any thing that the apostle here says.

The declaration is only a comprehensive renunciation of secular interests and influences as instrumentalities, or as working powers. When a man goes into a community to work, he instinctively says, "How shall I reach these men? What things will I employ for their renovation? What are the sources of power from which I will draw my influence?" The apostle says, "After looking over the whole field, I made up my mind that in attempting the renovation of men I would not rely on my power as a speaker, nor upon my ability to discourse rhetorically or eloquently, nor upon my intellectual forces." This had been done by many a man with great cogency. Grecian philosophers had spoken against vices. Thinkers, and men of wisdom in every age, had labored to suppress evil. And Paul, looking at such men as Socrates and Plato, said, "I meant, like them, to employ the soundest logic of which I was capable; I meant to make the best use of my reasoning power; but I did not

mean to rely upon these for success. Human nature is such that something is needed to change the heart; and I determined that, while I would use fancy, and reason, and every other instrumentality that presented itself, I would go higher than fancy, and behind reason, and come to the moral nature. I determined that I would rely upon my power to evoke from the bosom of God eternal truths, and upon the presentation of God's nature and God's government as manifested particularly through the Lord Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sinners. By these I meant to get a hold upon men's conscience, affections, and life."

A warrior, walking through his magazine, says, "I am going out to battle, and I will select the weapons on which I mean to rely." He passes by his bow and arrows, and says, "I do not intend to rely on them for the fighting of this battle." He comes to the department of his old-fashioned armor, and sees swords, and spears, and things like these, and says, "They were good in their time and way, but I do not intend to rely upon them either." When he gets to the place where he keeps the best instruments of modern warfare, he says, "Here are the things that I mean to depend upon."

It did not enter into his contemplation that he would not preach about war and peace; public and private economy; whatever, in brief, had reference to the welfare of men individually and collectively. Only this is to be inferred from his declaration: Whatever themes I discuss, it is upon the supernatural, divine power that I rely for success.

This course was a stepping out of the approved method of religious teaching. Both among Jews and Gentiles, Paul was an eccentric man. He did the thing that commended itself to his own judgment, without stopping to consider whether it was customary or not. His first thought was, "What ought to be done?" and his next thought, "What is the quickest way to do it?" His course was a violation of all the proprieties of religious custom.

But in our day, Paul's very originality, and this very declaration of his new liberty, have become the standing authority for routine; for conventional teaching; for a restriction of liberty in the pulpit. That which was a declaration of pulpit liberty has become a declaration of pulpit bondage. It is the impression of large classes of men—some of them most excellent men—that the Sabbath-day is too good to be spent in discussing any topics that are not strictly religious, and the church is a place too holy to be employed for speaking upon any thing except religious doctrines and technically Gospel truths. The introduction into the pulpit of what are called secular subjects is not considered to be in consonance with the Word of God, or the example of Christ, or the declaration of the apostle, who says, "I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Therefore men say, "You ought to preach about Christ more; you ought to preach more about the pure and peaceful precepts of the Redeemer, and not to agitate the congregation and the community with other topics." It is a misinterpretation, a perversion, a falsification of the whole temper and meaning of the language of the apostle, who says, not this, "I determined to exclude from my preaching all things except those of a religious nature;" but this: "I meant to measure your thoughts, your feelings, and your conduct by eternal truth—by the higher law. I meant, when I came to you, to measure your ways and your life, not by your customs in the street, in the family, in the sect, and in the synagogue—not by your old approved ways of reasoning, but by this new moral power of the Lord Jesus Christ, broken for the sins of the world."

What a broad conception is that! What a noble office it is to be a preacher, if it is to take the unsullied and eternal truths of God, and with these to show men the way out of dark places, and over rough places; if it is to take the authority of that which is right and true, and by it straighten the crooked places in life! If the pulpit is a place where

men are allowed to say what they please within the bounds of purity and rectitude, what a noble place is the pulpit! What sounding brass and tinkling cymbal is that man who has to go and ask those who have preached before, and those who are about him, what he may say! What an empty place is the pulpit if every thing is excluded from it except one particular class of subjects! But what a noble place is the pulpit, and what a noble calling is that of a minister, if he is a free man in Christ Jesus, and if there he is at liberty to say any thing that it is lawful to say any where! If the calling of a minister is such that he can say, "My business is to make men better; it is my business, through the individual, to make the family, the society, the nation, and the age in which I live better; I mean to take the highest truths, and by these bring a power to bear on every side of human life for the benefit of men"—if such is the calling of a minister, then it is a magnificent calling. He that truly fulfills such a calling may be said to sit not far from his place who is declared to sit upon the circle of the earth; for he has before him all creation for his book, all men for his audience, and the elements of divine power for his instruments.

There are two extremes which spring from the interpretation of this passage, both of which are full of danger. One of these is that which I have been speaking of, namely, the tendency of preaching to confine itself to the unfolding of doctrine and precept. It is an honest conception on the part of many conscientious men that nothing but precept and doctrine should be proclaimed from the pulpit. Many preachers tremble with the utmost sincerity lest they should do wrong by introducing into their sermons matters of a secular nature. And if it were not for their happy inconsistency, their preaching would be painfully rigid. We pity men on account of their inconsistencies, such is our esteem of consistency; but of the inconsistencies of preachers like these we might almost say what Luther said about our sins. In view of the revelation of redemption, he said, "Blessed are

our sins;" and we may say, "Blessed are our inconsistencies." By them we get away from our so-called wisdom.

The idea of excluding from the pulpit every thing but precepts and doctrines, if carried out in practice, besides making preaching dry, must inevitably, in the end, cause it to address itself only to the intellect. You will find that in the case of those who confine themselves really to the promulgation of ideal religious truths, unless God has endowed them with extraordinary power, their preaching is peculiarly dry. The minister thinks his sermons fail because the people are depraved; but that is not a justification of pulpit dullness, nor of didactic routine, nor of abstract doctrinal teaching.

Now and then there is a man of such genius that he can interest his hearers, though he confines himself to topics of a purely speculative nature. Here and there you will find some Bourdaloue, or some Massillon, that shall be able to make religious sentiments, without special applications, interesting, and so draw an audience; but in determining the rule in this matter, you must not determine from the few men of genius that the world has produced; for I affirm in respect to the men who go forth to preach, that the vast majority will become uninteresting if they confine their preaching strictly to conventional religious discourses.

This is already being proved true. The pulpit is relatively losing ground. You know, as well as I, that the Sabbath day does not draw forth for religious worship the whole population, nor one quarter of it. I venture to say that to-day there are one hundred men out of church in these cities where there is one in it. I can not speak with exactitude, but my impression is that the churches in New York* and Brooklyn will not average more than six or eight hundred sittings each. I think

* In New York, all churches, missions, and Sabbath-schools, Protestant and Roman Catholic, orthodox and unorthodox, American and foreign, for old and young, contain accommodations for 300,000 persons, or about one third of its entire population. The Protestant orthodox churches and Sabbath-schools provide for about 200,000.

I may say with certainty that they will not average over a thousand each; and I venture to say that not half of these sittings are regularly occupied. It is not because there is a want of learning, nor because there is a want of sincerity among ministers; it is because they are handcuffed and manacled with the idea that on Sunday they must not talk about any thing but doctrines and religious truisms. They are afraid to go beyond the opening up of the nature of truth. So they go on preaching about truth, and about truth, and about truth, and men are tired of hearing about truth. Once in a while a man preaches about *life*, and people flock to hear him, and they go away and say, "That was a real sermon; it followed me all the week, and I could but think about it at home, on the street, and in my business. I rather longed to have Sunday come so that I could go and listen again." Let a man, instead of preaching about truth, take truth as an instrument by which to preach about life, and he will be much more likely to have hearers, and to influence them for good.

The business of a minister is what? What did Christ say to those whom he chose to be teachers of the Gospel? "Follow me"—and what then?—"I will make you *fishers of men*." Now a minister's business is to catch men. We are to catch you. The hook by which we catch you is our sermons. That with which we load the hook is to be the supremest truth. In judging of your dispositions, I do not take the tenor of men's public opinion, and measure you by that. I go back of the voices of men, and lift myself up into the silence and secrecy of God's counsels, and ask what is right, what is true, and what is just, and, taking these, I go down to measure men in their every-day lives. If I unfold the truth, I am to do it for the sake of judging men, condemning them, and recreating them; for to be a minister is to have the art of catching men!

Many men there are who make fishing-rods who never themselves use them. To make fishing-rods is one thing, and to catch fish is another. Many men can make good

lines—silk lines and gut lines—who never think of going out themselves to catch fish. There are plenty of mechanics in Birmingham and Manchester that stand by the stithy and make all sorts of hooks, who never catch fish. Many of the men that make reels and baskets do not catch fish. The man who, having these things at his command, knows where the trout lie, and how to throw his line, and how to draw back when the fish rises to the hook—he, after all, is the fisherman.

Now there are hundreds of men who, when they go into the pulpit, make rods, and lines (very long lines), and hooks, and reels, and baskets. They take this or that doctrine, and pound it out into a hook, bending and kinking it just so, and stick it up on a paper, and label it, and that is the end of it. And this is called preaching! To know how to make rods, and lines, and hooks, and reels, and baskets, is called sound, regular, and approved preaching! But Christ says that that is preaching which catches men. And, so far from teaching you that you have no right to introduce into the pulpit any thing but the substance of doctrines, I affirm that the man who does not do it will never catch men. God's sovereignty may, out of the literal foolishness of his preaching, catch some men; but the commission of Christ to every man that undertakes to preach is, "Follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men." The business of a preacher is to catch men —proud men, vain men, wicked men, worldly men; and to catch them out of temptations, out of snares, out of wealth, out of poverty; for men are in more pools, ten thousand times, than ever fishes are. And that man who knows all kinds, and what sort of bait each loves, and how to coax him, and how to catch him, knows how to preach; but the man who does not know these things, though he knows every thing else, lacks a knowledge of the very thing that he was sent to do.

The opinion that we have no right to preach any thing except technical ideas must inevitably beguile the pulpit

to a neglect of duty under a pretense of duty, and make the services merely academic. Where a man feels that his ministerial duty is discharged when twice in each of fifty-two days of the year he has opened up some doctrine of faith or practice, some ethical or intellectual doctrine; where, in other words, a man's conception is limited, and where his conscience rivets it upon him, it can not but be that in three or four years his predilections will become simply academic. Within a short period he will have unfolded what he has to say, and that will be the end of him, so far as originality is concerned. All that he can do farther is to vary the thoughts that he has already expressed. Having lost the great source of originality, his poverty will drive him into routine courses. But the man who feels at liberty to take up human life—who feels that the legitimate topics of analysis and discussion are the ten million ever-varying phases of every-day experiences every where—*that* man can not but be original. That is original which strikes pat on your experience and upon your wants. There are very few original preachers in the absolute sense of that term. The great truths to be preached are few, and the variations that can be made in these truths are few; but the application of truth, so as to puncture vanity, and pride, and selfishness, so as to humble men that are puffed up, and so as to lift up men that are cast down, are endless. If a man lives with a constant eye upon the condition of men, with a constant sense of their needs, and with a constant knowledge of the means adapted to supply those needs, he can not grow shallow or get out of topics. The field of subjects for consideration is boundless in extent and unlimited in variety. If a minister confines himself in his preaching to doctrines, he will become jejune by routine; but if he preaches doctrines for the sake of applying them to life, he will not.

Now I beseech of you not to misconceive my idea, or to suppose that I am ridiculing doctrinal preaching. It is *wrong* doctrinal preaching that I am ridiculing. I think it is right

to make clear intellectual statements in respect to every part of religion; but that preaching which makes such statements merely for the sake of showing the truth rather than of applying the truth, is what I call wrong doctrinal preaching; for every truth is a sword of God, and a right use of it is not to make it bright, but strong and sharp in the stroke.

The effect, I remark once more, of the restriction of the minister's duty, by confining his preaching to the unfolding of precept and doctrine, is to limit the influence of the Church and its services to a small part of the mind, and to leave out of the ministrations of the Church that which constitutes the conscious life of the community.

Do you note our Lord's example in preaching? Did expositions of the Old Testament or disquisitions upon the reigning themes of religion fill up his discourses? Did he consider human affairs as too vulgar, and social life too secular, and the natural world too unreligious for his sermons? His sermons reflect all passing events. Birds sang in his discourses; the grass grew in his pulpit; flowers blossomed there! Now the vineyard was his text; then the husbandman and his oxen; the steward and his shrewd calculations; the exchange and its coins; the civil tribunal; the army and the tax-gatherer; the publican and the courtesan. He discoursed upon the dispositions, the thoughts, the errors, the virtues, the strifes or necessities of the age in which he lived, and of the people right before him. He spoke, too, about religious things, not in the sacred phrase of the temple and the synagogue, but in the familiar language which men employ in every-day life.

I remark again that the notion that the pulpit must be confined to the discussion of technically religious subjects implies that a man's character can be made independent of his secular life, and that the Church is to care only for his religious part. Alas! that it should be so; but we do separate our life from our religion. Our religious teaching leads us to do it. We seem to suppose that there is an apartment in the mind into

which God can introduce religion. We appear to think that though in the other apartments are pride, and vanity, and worldliness, and secularities of every possible form, yet above them all is an apartment filled with religion. As in a building let out with many offices there may be a pawnbroker in the basement, a lawyer on the ground floor, a purveyor in the second story, and far above them poor people, so that if a philanthropist goes to take care of these poor people he must not stop on the lower floors, but go up where his beneficiaries live, thus men seem to think that a man is built with floors for worldliness, rooms for business, apartments for politics and traffic, halls for all sorts of trash, while in some little chapel-like faculty the soul attends to worship and religion generally. They suppose that there are six days to be devoted to the world, which are in no sense religious days, and that there is one day which is peculiarly religious. And there is one part of the mind which on that day they feel it their duty to bring into exercise, and that they want the minister to play upon. On Sunday they expect him to walk into the attic of their head, and teach their moral sentiments. If he talks about other things lower down, they say, "Well, I should think I had enough of the world in six days of the week, without having it thrown into my face on Sunday." They desire that the seventh day shall be a day in which a man shall have rest from passions; in which his conscience shall not hunt him; in which nothing shall disturb him. They say, "I have wrought in the stithy and loom of my nature all the week, and for one day I want to wash and go where poetry will sing to me. And I want the minister to talk so that I shall have sweet dreams, and feel myself surrounded by delightful influences." And then what? Why, on Monday they will go back to the same things that occupied them before Sunday came, and will follow them through Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and then withdraw themselves from them for a single day; as if of

the rooms in a man's nature one was for organ-playing, and all the rest were for worldly avocations, restrained only by the laws of the land and the customs of society.

To accept such a view is to demoralize the community. We must teach the essential unity of a man's character. We must teach that a man's religion is as much a part of his work behind the counter, the anvil, or the steering-wheel, as in the sanctuary and before the altar. I do not mean that we should accept the idea that right conduct is religion. I do mean, however, that religion must have a hold on right conduct; I mean that a man can not be a saint on Sunday and a usurer during the week; I mean that one should have his religious character so symmetrical that it will still be serving God whether he is in the shop, on the farm, or in the thunder of battle. Whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God.

You can not bring men to such ideas as this unless your teaching informs them how to do the things prescribed. Suppose I should teach men that they are profoundly weak and wicked, and bring them to a conception of Christ as their Savior, and educate them toward holiness, and inspire their imagination and understanding with an ideal of purity, till such a hunger springs up in them for righteousness that they come to me from day to day and ask, "How shall I make my life better? What is right in my dealings with my fellows? How shall I perform my duty toward my tenants or my dependents? How shall I, in the various relations of life, adhere to truth and justice?"—suppose I should do these things, and then refuse to enlighten them farther? And how can I teach them how to do their duty in all these relations without discussing incidents of the family, of business, of every point in life? My people go out in the street, where there are wolves as well as foxes that destroy the tender vines, and they are sought after and waylaid; and shall the shepherd refuse to explain to them the nature of the foes that

surround them? And how can he explain without discoursing upon worldly topics?

This narrow and limited view, too, leaves out the design of the Gospel to fashion civil society, and regards its aim to be exclusively that of saving men from the perils of the future world. There are two radical ideas prevalent in the world as to the design of religion. One school teaches that this world is a poor worn-out ship, which never can be more than patched up, and that religion, instead of being a power to reconstruct the world, and to bring it to a perfect form before the throne of God, is a life-boat to get as many as possible off from the old world-ship before it goes down, carrying with it the remainder. Many men do not scruple to say, "This world will not be much better, as a whole, till Christ comes with absolute coercive power, like that by which he created the world." Before that time they do not expect much purity and holiness on earth.

The other theory teaches that while individual men are being saved by the Gospel, this is but a part of a great scheme by which the world itself is to be evangelized, so that this world shall one day stand before the eternal throne and the admiring assembly of heaven a perfected civil society.

Now this second idea I accept with all my heart. In order to bring it to pass, it is the business of teachers of religion to touch all questions belonging to the community. It is their business to make men morally intelligent of all the affairs about them, and to build them up in a knowledge of worldly things as judged from the stand-point of eternal truth and right.

Such views as those that I have combated are peculiarly agreeable to worldly men, and coincide with the wishes of all who have wrong deeds to cover. There are some good men whose prejudices lead them to desire to have secular topics excluded from the pulpit, but there are other men who desire the same thing because they have sinuous and wicked courses that they are afraid to have inveighed against. When the

vestmented priest says, "Temperance and temperance societies!—what has the Church to do with such things? We are set to preach the Gospel, and not ismatical reformations," the old man hears it reported to him from behind his barrels, himself as big and robustious as they, and says, "That is the priest for me who says, 'Let reformation keep out of the pulpit.'" And the debauchee says "Amen."

You and I were born in a land different in all its political ideas and civic duties from any other in the world. It was high treason to speak of political affairs in Rome, and the citizens had no business to meddle with civil affairs. But we live in a land where it is not our duty alone, but our necessity, to think about these things. And in the performance of my duty, while, under ordinary circumstances, I am not bound to teach you what are the individual elements of any party manœuvre—while I am not bound, as a general rule, to introduce the details of politics, I am bound, when any movement comes up that involves a great moral principle, to say, "Christian men, in these political questions is a moral question!" And that principle, and its relation to the Church, and the kingdom of Christ itself, I am bound to point out to you. When that is done, those men whose interest it is to have the community kept in ignorance, that they may the better perpetrate their wrong, are smitten to the heart with the thought that erratic clergymen should meddle with things that do not concern them! This is especially the case with regard to politics. But I declare that a minister who does not know any thing about politics has no business to teach. What right has a man to teach my children who does not know his first duty? In a country where every citizen is called to make magistrates and laws, where he must shape policies or leave wicked men to do it—under such a government, if one is bound more than another to be acquainted with public affairs, and to enlighten men concerning them, it is the religious teacher. But, it is said, ministers of religion are ignorant of politics. More the pity!

It is their business to learn their duty! If to pursue wicked ends by wicked courses; if to take sides with that which gravitates to the earth, and against that which aspires toward spiritual ideas; if always to be in favor of that which is base, and opposed to that which is noble; if to avoid the straight path of sincerity, and to stumble in the circuitous ways of deceit—if to do these things is to know politics, I confess that I am ignorant. But if to believe that there is such a thing as loving one's whole country; if to believe that there is such a duty as watching for one's country; if to believe that oppression is hateful, and nowhere else so hateful as in a Christian nation and in a republic—if to be jealous of the rights of the poor, to urge their education and elevation; if to believe that it is a part of your Christian work, for the sake of your country, to be true, and bold, and fearless in season and out of season—if to believe these things is to be acquainted with politics, then I am informed. Heretofore the word *politics* has been a stench and a by-word; but there ought to be a public sentiment such that when a man does his political duty to the community, and the nation, and the age in which he lives, it shall be esteemed an eminent moral excellence, praiseworthy and noble!

Unless there is secular teaching in the pulpit there never will be constitutional liberty. You know that those times in which the pulpit never talked of any thing except abstract truth were the times when tyrants flourished. When rulers can keep a people from taking part in civil affairs, they have a broad stithy and iron enough to forge links of oppression. The age in which constitutional liberty was born, in the struggles in the Netherlands, and Holland, and Puritan England, was an age in which men preached about the truth of God in relation to public and civil affairs. The liberties of this people were wrought out at a time when from every pulpit in the land men, women, and children were educated how to be citizens; and if you lose your citizenship, and your Christian conception of it, it will be because the Church and the ministry

abandon their duty of teaching this nation what are its political obligations as a Christian people. We came near losing our government. The divine hand was outstretched just in time to save it. It had become so seemingly devoid of right and justice that a generation had grown up dumb, and they did not open their mouth until they were cast down, that the devil might be cast out of them.

I go yet farther, and state that though there has been this general conception that preaching was merely to be a descanting upon spiritual topics, and that it had no particular relation to a man's business or outer life, yet, after all, there has been underneath this a conviction that it was not so. The idea has been so impossible to be carried out that it has destroyed itself.

You know that I have been with you nearly fourteen years. The text from which I have preached this morning is the text from which I preached to you on the night when I first preached in the building that then stood where the lecture-room now stands. Fourteen years ago the coming October I gave you substantially the same view that I have given you to-day, namely, that a minister's duty is to teach men how to conform, not their dispositions alone, but their outward lives, to the commands of Christ in his Gospel. I said I would be free to speak on what I thought was right, and discuss every question that I thought ought to be discussed in the pulpit, and I have attempted to do it. I am not mentioning it to boast of my fidelity, for you can not have had such withering conceptions as I have of the incompetency of my ministry. I am not proud of having done much, but I am unspeakably overwhelmed with shame that, having so much truth on my side, I have done so little. And yet I can call you to witness that I have not used this pulpit to preach things because other ministers preached them, or for the sake of being at agreement with my brethren. I have never preached a thing that at the time I did ministers to be true; and I laid it down as a rule that in my

preaching I would not confirm a statement by any argument that did not seem to me to be a correct argument, however much it might be used, and however influential it might be. I have attempted to express my convictions without fear of running counter to your opinions and feelings. I have frequently borne testimony against your wishes, and sometimes when there was no inconsiderable discrepancy between your thoughts and mine. But there has been liberty to rebut my statements, and we have had unity; for there is always safety where there is liberty. For fourteen years I have attempted to hold on this course, although, as you know, it has laid me open to great criticism, and called down upon my head, in the newspapers, from one end of the land to the other, the most opprobrious epithets and the most unmeasured abuse, as having degraded the Sabbath day and the pulpit by introducing into my discourses subjects foreign to religion.

Now, after fourteen years have passed, there comes this great period, this critical period, this Gethsemane and crucifixion day of this nation, out of which shall come new life and glorious salvation.* And what has taken place? Almost every minister in the land has thrown away his antiquated notion that it is wrong to preach about secular topics on Sunday. There is not a pulpit in the South that has not sounded over and over again the subject of war. The value of political preaching is recognized there. And so it is at the North. There is scarcely a church in this city or New York from which, in these times when men's souls burn with patriotism, the Stars and Stripes have not floated, and in which Sunday political sermons have not been preached. The ministers of all denominations have introduced into their Sabbath discourses political topics. The whole community were so united in their zeal for the country that they would not suffer silence. And every man's heart said, "It is right; it must be right." They felt that there was a propriety in

* This sermon was preached in the midst of the civil war.

measuring human conduct in state affairs by the everlasting principles of truth and justice.

The sublimest history of the Church of Christ, I think, within the last twenty-five years, has taken place during the last three or four months, when the ministers of churches have with one accord so far broken away from the shackles that have bound them as to discuss secular topics in the light of the Gospel. Now I think we shall hear nothing more against politics in the pulpit.

A man may preach politics too much. A man may do it foolishly. So a man may administer a bank foolishly, manufacture foolishly, or carry on any other business foolishly; but that is no reason why a bank should not be established, why a man should not engage in manufacturing, or why business of any sort should not be carried on. A minister may not be discreet in preaching upon secular topics, but that is no reason why they should not be preached upon. There have been indiscreet ministers from the days of the apostles, and it would be strange if in the future there should not be found here and there one that is not discreet. But the duty of introducing such topics is now generally acknowledged. I think that question is settled for your life and mine, at least.

I will make but one more remark before I close, and that is this. While we are pointing out the mischiefs that will be apt to come into the Church and the pulpit, as it is said, by the introduction of these topics on the Sabbath-day, is it not time for Christians to begin to consider the state of the Church and the pulpit? I am not filled with alarm, because, God reigns; but in so far as human influence is concerned, my own impression is that the Church and the pulpit are drifting out to sea. Not because they are so incorrect in doctrine—it is worse than that. Incorrectness of doctrine is apt to be only a pimple on the surface that shows the state of the blood. The trouble is, they are ceasing to be the voice of God in the community. And what is the consequence? It

is that more and more the community are leaving them. People in this country do not attend church any thing like as much as they did in my younger days. I do not think one third of the people of this nation are accustomed to attend church. And I do not think the proportion that attend church is gaining. I fear that we are losing ground in this regard. While the introduction of life questions and life interests is forbidden, so that men go to church to listen to things that they do not care about, to hear doctrines preached upon that they do not understand, and do not want to understand, we shall lose ground more and more. Until you make preaching the preliminary of practical living, so that men shall say, "By it I find my fears removed, my hopes strengthened, my weaknesses inspired, and my discouragements lessened," it will not be of much benefit to the world. Not until it makes men better as merchants, farmers, mechanics, and mariners, will it be an instrument of very great good. But when the Church has this witness among the common people that it is a place where there is salvation and the water of life, then you need not be afraid but what it will grow.

Let us then, my brethren, remember, not that doctrine is wrong, and that religious truth is not to be unfolded, but this—that the end of all truth is the conviction and conversion of men; the edifying them in Christian life; the reconstruction of human society, so that the whole earth shall be as a temple of God. And if this be the end of all teaching and preaching, we must broaden our conceptions of the duty of the pulpit, and we must give pulpit liberty.

All liberty is intoxicating. If you bring up a generation of young men with this doctrine, you must expect that many will be imprudent, and foolish, and mischievous. And when men point to them and say, "There, that is the fruit of your famous liberty of the pulpit," we may reply, "The beginnings of greater freedom are like the beginnings of daylight." When Christ had touched the man's eyes once, he said, "I

see men as trees walking." When he had touched them twice—that is, when he had given him more of the same sort—he saw every man clearly. If a little liberty does not make men stable, give them more of it. Put responsibility on them, forbear with their mistakes, encourage them, and when the pressure of responsibility is more and more realized, they will be more stable, and move in larger circuits, and with more glory to God, and quicker salvation to the human family.

VIII.

Preaching Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.

(Continued.)

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath evening, September 22d, 1861.

Preaching Christ.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 Cor., ii., 1, 2.

The New Testament teaches, in the most unequivocal manner, that Jesus Christ is very God. He may therefore be conceived as dwelling in the majesty and supernal glory of heavenly government. Or we may follow faintly in imagination all the rounds of creation, and conceive of his creative acts; for all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that is made. Or we may consider his administrative life, and reflect upon his power in renewing, sustaining, and enriching the natural world. Or we may conceive of him as the head of a government over mankind, administered through natural laws, with special divine volitions and purposes which we call providential. In either case our conceptions will be profitable and ennobling; but they will benefit us just in proportion as we are advanced in moral culture, and have begun to be ourselves in some measure like God. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But ah! how many, then, can see him? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. But the whole world lieth in wickedness; and how shall we arouse them, inspire hope in them, and bring them, imperfect, sinful, and guilty, to be influenced of God? The reply is already uttered in these words: "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Those traits and attributes which lead God to pardon sin and to heal sinners are manifested in Christ Jesus, and it was this pardoning aspect of Christ as God that the apostle so much dwelt upon and so insists upon here. For he does not merely declare, "I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ." He might know him as Creator, and even as Administrator. He declares, "I determined not to know any thing among you save Christ, *and him crucified.*" It is a *crucified* Savior, and not merely the Savior Christ as God, that the apostle was determined to know. And in the chapter preceding this he says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." Not the presentation of Christ as God that is often made, but that peculiar presentation of Christ as God which the cross symbolizes—it is this that the aspostle declares to be the foundation of his ministry. The very reliance which he had for success was this—that he believed in such a Savior, and was determined to draw from the consideration of such a Savior all those influences by which he hoped to effect the renovation of men and of society.

This is the reason, then, why Paul so much emphasized the cross, the crucifixion, and the death of Christ. It is God under material conditions, suffering unto bodily death for sinful men, that furnishes the most stimulating and subduing influences that can be brought to bear upon the human soul. Therefore, in going forth upon his apostolic mission, he relied upon the influences that there were in a crucified Savior to revolutionize the human soul and transform the life.

It is said that Christ crucified was unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. The Jew had a conception of the Messiah, but it was an intensely worldly conception. It was altogether sensuous—physical. It contemplated empire; earthly wealth; political power; palaces, and thrones, and armies, and dominions. When, therefore, a broken Jesus was presented to them, humbling himself, and

becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, lower than the lowest, and less than the least, he was indeed a stumbling-block to the Jews. He was foolishness to the Greeks. There was no part of their nature that could understand him. There was no part of their nature that could understand the suffering of the Divine Being for the sake of his creatures. In all their mythology there was no record of any gods that had any trait or attribute which would lead them to suffer in behalf of inferior beings.

But Paul had felt the power on his own heart of a broken Christ. The presentation of such a Christ had done its work upon him. He knew what it had done for him. He had seen, too, what influence it had upon others; and it was the very power by which he hoped to change the world.

There is a great scale of motives which influence men, and which may, in their own rank and place, be addressed to men for the production of right conduct. We may attempt to dissuade men from evil by the intrinsic hatefulness of evil. We may attempt to persuade men to a course of holiness on account of the beauty of holiness. We may teach men to leave off things that are wrong, and to revolt from them because they are wrong. We may teach men to follow that which is good because goodness is attractive to every right-minded and noble nature. In this intrinsic hatefulness of evil and attractiveness of good there is a power which we may properly employ. We may appeal to the self-interest of men, and teach that "godliness is profitable in all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." There is a degree of power in that presentation to many minds. There are motives that may in some measure touch every faculty of the soul. But in its nature the soul responds most, not to those collateral motives which are drawn from the things which exist about us, but to those which bring upon us the influence of God's own personal presence. The sense of his being, of his eternity, and of the immortality in which he dwells—this is that to which the

soul most responds. It is true that men are so shut out from these views that they are, as a matter of fact, more powerfully influenced by worldly considerations; but the nature of the mind is such that when you can fairly bring to bear upon it these higher motives, they are capable of producing greater changes in it than can any secular, sordid motives whatsoever.

But when divine and infinite things are brought before the mind, some things are more apt to stimulate men than others. Those views which impress the mind with its own weakness, and want, and imperfection, and guilt, and dreadful danger, are very apt to be influential. The impression of these things upon the mind is the result of preaching Christ crucified; of calling attention to the stupendousness of the offering that he made when he gave himself for the world; of pointing out all the steps accompanying his mission on earth, that were afterward declared to be necessary on account of the sinfulness of every human creature, from which sinfulness, without the atonement, men could never have been saved. It is impossible, it seems to me, to produce a rational and realizing sense of man's sinfulness unless you make sin to consist in violations against a living person. When you preach to men that they have broken the law of God, they do not seem to be brought very near to the Divine Majesty; but when you hold up before them not only the justice of God, but his generosity as manifested through Christ, recounting to them the history of his sufferings and the story of his love, you bring them to a sense of their offense against the Most High, which wakes up in the soul, if there is a spark of love in it, a generous sorrow. If you desire to bring to men a view that shall convict them of their sinfulness, you must spread before them the sufferings and death, as well as the love and everlasting beneficence of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may measure human conduct by law, and represent the issues of conduct as wise or foolish; but, after all, though there is a certain measure of truth in this direction, that which seizes the soul, and

fills it with enthusiasm of emotion, is that truth which brings before the mind the character of Christ as the Savior of sinners.

Those views which represent God as profoundly concerned for man, as attempting to rescue him, and as willing himself to bear the pains and penalties of sin rather than that we should suffer, have in their very nature a remarkable power and tendency to arouse and affect the whole human soul.

Those views which represent the attractive love of God, burning in his deep soul toward sinful beings while yet in sin, and working out endlessly in endeavors to build them up in beauty and holiness, are admirably adapted to influence the minds of men.

Those views which represent the intimate love of Christ for his disciples, and his familiarity with them, and the spiritual communion which is begun here and is to be consummated hereafter, disclosing the whole economy of God's saving grace as manifested in Christ Jesus, have a constitutional, and, I might almost say, an everlasting relation to the understanding, to the feelings, to the will, to every part of the human soul.

This revelation of God in Christ is a power compared with which there is no other power worth naming. It is the wisdom of God. It is the power of God unto salvation. Above all other known influences it controls the human heart, inspires it with love, and with purity through loving.

Therefore, when the apostle said, "I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," he avowed his faith that in the presentation of the divine nature as represented by Christ, there is more moral power upon the heart and the conscience than in any other thing, and his determination to draw influences from that source in all his work.

In view of this, I remark,

1. The personal influence of Jesus Christ upon the heart is the first requisite for a Christian preacher. We may preach

much *about* Christ, but no man will preach *Christ* except so far as Christ is in him. No man can set forth the soul's need of Christ who has not felt that need in his own soul. No man can urgently plead the joy of salvation through Christ who has not experienced that joy in his own heart. It is not enough to have a knowledge of theology, though that is not to be despised. It is not enough to know the mind of man, though the philosophy of the human mind is not to be disregarded, and is, in its place, almost indispensable. The secret of success in the preaching of the Gospel is that the preacher himself shall have felt the power of that Gospel. There are many men that by natural gifts are qualified to stand eminent and pre-eminent above their fellows, who, though they have a certain kind of personal influence, exert but little religious influence; and, on the other hand, there are many men that are comparatively of slender stature and small endowment, whose life is like a rushing, mighty wind in the influence which it exerts. The presence of Christ in them is the secret of their power. The poorest man, the most ignorant man, is mighty through God. If his soul is aroused and inspired by the hope, by the faith, and the love which are in Christ Jesus, he has a power that others can not derive from mere learning, from wisdom, or from any other source.

It is not learning, nor eloquence, nor flow of natural enthusiasm, but that stir and glow which a genuine experience of love, and faith in Christ give, that make a man an efficacious witness and teacher of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I do not mean merely in the pulpit. There is to be professional preaching, but every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is, in his own way, to be a preacher. Every parent is to be a preacher to his children. Every schoolmaster or schoolmistress is to be a preacher to his or her pupils. Every man is to be a preacher to those that are subject to his influence. There is not a Christian who has not a parish in which he is bound to preach. Where there is a palpita-

ting love of holiness, where there is a zealous fear of offending God, where the soul yearns and longs for Christ Jesus, it is strange with what a witching power it is endowed.

2. A man's success in preaching will depend upon his power of presenting before men the Lord Jesus Christ. I have said that the experience of Christ's presence in one's own soul was the first requisite. This requisite being possessed, he will have most success in selecting topics for discourses who has power most effectually to present to the minds of his congregation the nature of God as set forth in Christ Jesus. There is a great deal of useful didactic matter that every minister must give to his congregation. There is a great deal of doctrinal matter that he must introduce into his preaching. I do not dissuade from doctrine. It is only the despotisms of doctrine that I would discountenance. No one is fit to instruct his congregation who can not present, with some logical coherence, the great truths of which he speaks. Doctrines have their place in preaching, though not the chiefest place. There is also much of fact, of history, and of description that belongs to the ministerial desk. The Bible is full of material for these things. Ethics should occupy an important place in every minister's teaching. The nature of the human mind; the methods by which it acts; the analysis of character; men's occupations; all the sinuous channels in which our thoughts and feelings run—these are things that it is proper to take up and explain in the pulpit.

But high above all these topics; high above abstract propositions; high above facts of history; above all descriptions; above all teaching of what is right and duty—high above them all is the fountain of influence, Christ, a living person who gave himself a ransom for sinners, and now ever lives to make intercession for them. Though one preaches every other truth, if he leaves this chiefest one out, or abbreviates it, he will come short of the essential work of the Gospel. Put this in, and you have all, as it were, in brief. The power of the Christian ministry is in the pre-

sentation, not simply of great truths, but of *the* truth as it is in Christ Jesus. In that will be the measure of its real and lasting influence.

3. There can be no sound and effective method of preaching ethics, even, which does not derive their authority from the Lord Christ. The motives derivable from the secular and human side of ethics are relatively feeble. Even if one chose to preach the great moralities of life, it were wise to ground them in God. Morality, without spirituality, has no roots. It becomes a thing of custom, changeable, transient, and optional. The dispute sometimes waged between doctrine and practice would never be allowed if high doctrines reached forth to practical results, and if precepts and morality reached back to divine authority. There is no need of controversy any more than between science and art, between pure mathematics and mathematics applied, between analytic chemistry and organic chemistry.

There may be a practical mistake in the proportionate administration of the one or the other element—the abstract or the concrete; but the dynamics and proportions of teaching must be largely left to the judgment and the original nature of each teacher. Men work by different mental instruments. Each man has a right to his own genius; but, whatever method is pursued, the indispensable connection between the spiritual element and the practical development should be maintained. Morality without spirituality is a plant without root, and spirituality without morality is a root without stem and leaves.

The great mistake which men make in regard to the introduction into the pulpit on the Sabbath-day of what are called secular topics, is, that they do not conceive that such topics are to be discussed in the light of higher truths, and that they are to derive their influence and authority from the considerations which flow from the nature of Christ, and his claims upon us. I have a right to speak upon agriculture here—not as agriculture alone, but in the relations which it

sustains to religion. "Ye are God's husbandry," saith the apostle. Many men are in that calling. It has an influence upon their thoughts, and feelings, and acts, and is working all the time in one way or another upon their souls, and it is my business to draw from it lessons for their instruction and benefit. Are you called to be a mariner? Then there are a thousand lessons that it is my business to draw from the life of a mariner, because they touch you. Are you called to be a tradesman? Then there are multitudes of lessons that it is my business to draw from the vocation of a tradesman, because it is taking hold of your tastes and habits, and is framing and fashioning something of your immortality. I am bound to discuss financial questions—not for the sake of money, as a banker would discuss them, but because they have an influence upon the life and destiny of those whom they concern. I have a right to introduce into my sermons all secular topics as far as they are connected with man's moral character, and his hopes of immortality. If I discuss them in a merely secular way, I desecrate the pulpit; but if I discuss them in the spirit of Christ, and for Christ's sake, that I may draw men out of their peculiar dangers, and lead them into a course of right living, then I give dignity and nobility to the pulpit.

4. All reformations of evil in society, all civil and social reformations, should spring from this vital centre. It seems to me to be a very dangerous thing to preach Christ so that your preaching shall not be a constant rebuke to all the evil in the community. That man who so preaches Christ, doctrinally or historically, that no one takes offense, no one feels rebuked, no one trembles, is not a legitimate and faithful preacher of Christ. On the other hand, it is a dangerous thing for a man to attack evil in the spirit of only hatred. To arouse evil feelings against evil, to contend against malignant mischief by malignant passions, is surely not Christian! The sublime wisdom of the New Testament is this: "Overcome evil with good." The fundamental rule for

a reformer is that he shall not only hate evil, but cleave to that which is good. A man's love of that which is good should be more powerful, if possible, than his hatred of that which is evil; for if a man attempts to reform evil because he hates it, he brings himself into one of the most dangerous states of mind. It is demoralizing to a community to have reforms spring from hatred of evil; but those reforms which spring from the love of Christ are regulated, tempered, restrained. That man only is truly a reformer who is a *Christian* reformer. Was Christ not a reformer? Did he not come to save the world? Did he not come to save the intemperate, the unjust, the dishonest? And when he lived, did he not hate evil? Did he not abhor it? Was he not that God before whose sight no evil could be allowed? And yet with what wondrous pity, and with what sweetness of love did he dwell in the midst of these things, so that the publicans—those men that were debauched and corrupted with the handling of public moneys, learning every trick of iniquity in consequence of it—so that the publicans and the sinners (for that is the term by which those fallen creatures that even to this day swarm our streets are known in Scripture) took heart, became inspired with hope, and drew near to him in strong faith and confidence that there was pity for them in him. Christ reformed men by inspiring the love of goodness as well as by hatred of evil, and he drew men from their sin as well as drove them from it. All hatred of evil is unchristian which is not mingled with compassion for the evil-doer. The passions are to be controlled by the inspiration of moral sentiments. The sweetness of that which is good, the beauty of that which is right, the majesty of that which is just and true, are to work along with the hatred of evil, and to work in double measure. Evil *is* to be abhorred, but abhorrence must not overtop benevolence!

The cleansing of the immoral, the liberation of the enslaved, the restraint of sultry lusts, the detection of criminals and

their punishment, the mitigation of selfishness, the humiliation of pride, the resistance of greed and avarice, are pre-eminently labors of love, and not of wrath. Hatred will never reform any thing. It may destroy, but Love is the only architect.

5. Hence all philanthropies are partial and imperfect that do not grow out of this same root. As all hatred of evil is dangerous that is not inspired and accompanied by the love of Christ, so that philanthropy, or the attempt to organize positive good in human life, is lacking, which does not spring from the same organizing centre, and which is not inspired by the same influence. But when philanthropy springs from this centre, and is inspired by this influence, it becomes, not a mere sentimentalism, but a vivid and veritable power in human society. There are no true philanthropists, it seems to me, but those that take man in his whole nature; that look upon him as a creature of God's just government, as a child of immortality, a subject of divine rewards and penalties; and that attempt to build up in him that which is good, according to the largest pattern of spiritual truth. Philanthropy without religion becomes meagre. It is the love of man uninspired by the love of God!

6. All public questions of justice, of liberty, of equity, of purity, of intelligence, should be vitalized by the power which is in Christ Jesus. There are other motives that may press men forward a little way, but there is nothing that has such controlling power as the personal influence of the Lord Jesus. When, therefore, in such a time as this, we are crowding along great subjects, or, rather, when they are crowding us along, and we are swept onward in the current of great national agitations, let us remember that there is but one way in which we can deal with all such subjects, and be thorough, and at the same time certain and safe, namely, by making every one of them religious subjects, Christian subjects, inspired by direct contact with the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we bring secular matters into this re-

lation, there is wholesomeness introduced into them, as well as into us in the management of them.

And now, my dear Christian friends, are not these views in accordance with the repeated teaching of the whole New Testament Scriptures — that every thing which belongs to human life must in some way be connected with the grand redemptive centre of moral government, Christ Jesus?

"Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

In our personal character, in our enthusiasms, in our imaginations, in our enjoyments, in all the amenities of social life, there is to be the presence of this divine love. In all that we attempt to do to abate evil, in all that we attempt to do to establish good, in our sympathy and concurrence with the great movements of the age in which we live, our power to do good will be in proportion to the strength and purity of our spiritual life. Jesus Christ, and him *crucified*, is still the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation, not only of the individual heart, but of civil societies.

If there be those, then, that are ambitious, and that have felt with reference to themselves substantially as the mother did respecting her two sons, of whom she said, "Lord, grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom;" if there are any that have been desirous of obtaining influence and power, I would say to them, Beware of the upswelling of natural pride; beware of an over-active vanity! Remember that the [illegible] to power is not through self-elevation and self-aggran[illegible] through humiliation. You are to come to [illegible]ment of yourself; by putting on the Lord

Jesus Christ; by having your life hid with Christ in God; by learning to look at all things in the light of eternity.

Power and goodness are synonymous. The secret of true power is in self-denial, disinterestedness, an unwearied love, a faith that pierces the invisible, and a hope that appropriates it! But those that go hither and thither, seeking a great name, and place, and influence; wishing to do great things; seeking their own good and not another's, and still less God's glory—all these must needs come short of the highest power. The burying of self; the enthroning of Jesus; the living, not for the visible and the transient, but for the invisible and the eternal; the might of God manifest in Christ, and made known to us through our own experience —these are the ways and methods of power—the secret of power not alone in the individual, but in the ministry, in the Church, in communities, and in the world. Whether we know it or not, God, blessed be his name! is overruling our ignorance, and guiding our very mistakes. He is pressing forward this wonderful moral power to its consummation. The day lingers, but shall not linger forever, when he shall take to himself his almighty power, and come and reign in myriads of now darkened hearts; in churches that are now Christian only in name; in institutions that, though they were established under the benign influences of Christianity, no longer represent it; in civil councils and in warlike camps; and then the whole earth shall see the salvation of our God. Even so, Lord, come quickly!

And now, ye praying, weeping, pleading Christians, that seem to have but a small sphere, remember that every single Christian aspiration which you have, every vital and God-inspired Christian experience that is wrought out in you, no matter when or where, becomes a part of the riches of God in the world. Money is money, and, though locked up in the deepest and darkest vault, every coin is one more coin of the world's wealth. The heart is God's mint, and every single evolution of true Christian feeling is an addition to the

greatness of God's power in this world. Do not think that you must be in some public position. Fulfill in secret the will of Christ Jesus. Let the mind that was in Christ be more and more completely in you. Let the spirit of Christ dwell in you richly in all things; and thus you will be preachers of Christ, and faithful witnesses; and ere long you shall hear that voice, sweeter than all conceivable music, saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

IX.

The Long-suffering of God.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath evening, February 23d, 1862.

The Long-suffering of God.

"Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering."—1 Tim., i., 16.

This is not the first nor the only time in the writings of Paul in which he recognizes, with vivid sensibility, the patience which God had manifested toward him personally. There seems to have been in his heart a fountain of gratitude for this patience which never exhausted itself. The divine goodness in this regard excited in his bosom, from first to last, unbounded thankfulness.

The long-suffering of God is much insisted upon in Scripture both by those who have experienced it and by him who exercises it. It is remarkable that the sacred Scriptures should have succeeded in combining the two apparently discordant views, God's terrible avulsion from evil, his hatred of it, and his patience with it, and with them that committed it. The impression of both is vividly presented—that God will punish sin, and yet that God spares, and waits to be gracious; that he is slow to anger, and quick to mercy; and yet that he administers a government of justice, and that in the end he will not clear the guilty. The impression of God's terrible justice and judgment is made strong, and the impression of God's kindness and love is made equally strong.

To-night I wish to unfold, somewhat at length, the view of God's long-suffering.

In the first place, look upon the radical idea of human society upon earth as of a child-race to be developed and brought forward. Even leaving out the question of moral

desert, consider what a work it is to rear up through thousands of years, in long succession, a race that begins, in all its conditions, at nothing, as it were, and feels and finds its way up, little by little, through experience to manhood in the individual, and to carry on, at the same time, a development of nations, and of peoples from barbarism, or that which is next akin to it, up through civilization to the highest degree of human capacity. Consider that the elevation of mankind to that point is the work which God has purposely undertaken. The divine government is not a government that has a nation already furnished; it is the government of a being that essays, through thousands of continuous years, to go on in a circle of perpetual education and development. Parents educate their children from infancy, but after a time the child takes care of itself, and their labor ceases. God, the eternal Father, is forever in the nursery and at the cradle. His work never ends. He has purposed to himself the task of rearing up a race which will require him to bear them in perpetual patience and long-suffering.

Consider, next, in the light of history, what this race has been. Consider what has fallen out in the process of this grand experiment of the world. If you regard man comprehensively, nothing can be more striking than that his animal part has predominated since the world began. The less, the inferior, the lower part of man, has been in the ascendant. The power of the human race has been its animal power thus far. Wonderful as have been the achievements of civilization in the world, man has been characteristically an animal on the globe.

Of all those that are born, by far the greatest number answer, apparently, no useful end. Why they should be born is a marvel. Why, being born, and only encumbering the ground from year to year, they should be continued in existence, is another marvel. Few have lived that have not been a burden on the earth. Of men in their best conditions in a civilized community, how many are there that have given

to the stock of human thoughts one single thought that has lived after they were gone? How many even of those that are civilized, and restrained by the influences of Christianity, so widely diffused, have given incarnation, and so additional force, to the truth, in human life? How many are there who have created any thing that survives them? How many are there who will be mourned one day when they are gone except by those personally connected with them? In respect to ninety-nine in a hundred, it may be said that they would not be missed an hour if they should die. There is, here and there, one at the head of a business, one in a school, or one belonging to a family, that would be missed much longer than that; but in respect to the great majority, it may be said that if they should be stricken out of existence, in an hour they would not be missed more than a pebble is missed, that, being thrown into the water, makes a circle and goes down, never again to be seen by human eyes. The greatest number of men that are born, even into civilization, live and die without one single heroic purpose; without one noble achievement; without doing a thing to make men better. They simply constitute a link in the chain of the race.

Consider how unwilling men are to obey both natural and moral laws. Some do not know them, and those we do not blame so much; but those that know, I will not say the Decalogue, but the plainer laws that selfishness should have taught them to obey—the laws of man's own body—how many are there that have not done violence to every organ, nerve, and vessel in their physical system? Men violate the laws of the stomach, of the brain, of the heart, of every part of their outward being, and that continually. And this is not so in single instances merely—it is characteristic of the race. It is marked by diseases, which show that vengeance has scarred them for the violation of natural laws. How limited is the understanding, by reason of the violation of the laws of the understanding. How weak is the moral sense,

by reason of a perpetual violation of the laws of the moral sense. If you consider, either in detail or comprehensively, what is the great schedule of laws under which this race was created to act, nothing can be more striking than this: that they have been willfully, and pertinaciously, and generically disobedient.

Consider how slow has been the progress of amelioration and civilization in the world. After the lapse of six thousand years, what is the state of manhood? The old patriarchs lived, and established institutions, and died, and left records; judges and prophets lived, and bore witness, and passed away, and left records; later prophets lived, and gave their testimony, and departed; the Savior came, and performed his earthly mission, and returned to him that sent him; the apostles appeared, and went forth, and spread a knowledge and faith of the new and living way, and went to their reward; and in every subsequent age the work of disseminating the truth has been faithfully carried forward; and yet to say that of the more than a thousand million souls that now inhabit the globe one million are vitally and experimentally Christians would be an extravagant estimate. To say that there are more *nominally* Christian nations than heathen nations would be to outrage the facts. If you were to put a shadow on the globe where there is heathenism, and light where there is Christianity, even in its nominal forms, the shadow to the light would be as the little finger to the rest of the hand. There have been six thousand years—six thousand years of dispensation; six thousand years of advancement; six thousand years of history; six thousand years of successive civilization—and it seems as though the parts of the globe where there is civilization, compared with the whole globe, were as the wick or flame of a torch to the torch itself.

Consider, too, what have been the characteristic developments of the race in cruelty, in deceit, in selfishness, in wars, and in revolutions. I know that there has been much incarnated justice in laws and institutions; I know that there has

been a great deal of domesticity even in jungles and barbaric wildernesses; but, after all, of the things that have had record in the world, of the many sources of violence, injustice, and cruelty, I do not know of any thing else that is so cruel as man. Lions are not; tigers are not; wolves are not; serpents are not. A lion was made to eat meat; but he never kills any more than he wants, and he does not kill that for cruelty. He makes use of his power simply for the purveyance of his own necessities. It is only man that revenges. It is only man that studies cruelty, and makes it exquisite, and prolongs it, and carries it out with appliances of art. From the despot on the throne to the despot of the household, all men alike carry vengeance, bitterness, wrath, hurtfulness, as characteristic of the race. There has been enough blood shed by the hand of man to bear up the navies of the globe. When a lion sheds blood, he laps it up. When man sheds blood, he does not eat it; it falls to the ground, and cries for vengeance. The earth has been wet with blood. Tears have flowed like rivers. This has not occurred merely once in some great cycle. It has been the constant history of mankind. Time has walked ankle-deep in tears and blood on the face of the earth from the beginning.

And yet God has been the governor of this world—of this race. One would think that he would have swept it away, as with a flood he swept away the earlier race. One would suppose that he would have burned up the globe, and stopped the nefarious history. His patience, his forbearance, his hopefulness, has saved it until this day.

Consider the progress of Christianity among men. How long is it since that divine spectacle of time, the innocent and sacred One lifted upon Calvary, was beheld? Eighteen hundred years and more have passed since then. There was no such spectacle before, there has been no such spectacle since, and there never shall be such a spectacle again. With this end of sacrifices, what an evolution there was of truth; and what an outpouring there now is of divine effulgent influ-

ences! How, for eighteen hundred years, this Gospel has been going forth, ministered by I know not what successions of faithful men! One would suppose that the earth would at least have come to twilight; but, alas! how many Christian nations are there on the globe? and what is the condition even of those that profess to be Christians?

Consider the present condition of the world. What is the condition of the continent of Asia? It is the scene of barbaric life, and the repository of rude and coarse materiality. You might sink Asia, and the world would lose no secrets of civilization, no valuable institutions, and no moral treasures.

What is the condition of Africa? It is enveloped in perpetual night. It is one of the noblest continents on the globe; one of the richest in material wealth, and in the elements of the growth of races; and yet, from end to end, it is populated by a people that are susceptible of much, but that develop almost nothing. It is a vast haunt of oppression, and ignorance, and abomination, and wickedness. Here and there is the merest glimpse of light, just on the edges of it; but it may be said of Africa, comprehensively, that it is one vast cavernous den of iniquity.

What is the condition of Europe? Look at Italy, the theatre of so much past civilization; the home of art; the centre of the world's proudest talents; the place from whence we have derived so much of law and statesmanship. Italy is scarcely yet wrested from the robber's hand. Rome, even now, smokes with abomination before God. It is still cursed by despotism. The people in other parts of Italy are just gathering themselves on their feet, and standing up as men. Look at the German empire. What is the condition of Austria and Hungary, with their discontented and uprising people? Look at France and England, jealous of each other, ambitious of power far beyond their potency to maintain, and attempting to revolutionize the globe. Avarice is their heart, and the sword is their law. Protestant England and Catho-

lic France are leagued together for—what? Empire. Commerce is the Gospel that rules in France, and rules in England, and rules all over the world.

Is our own country an exception? What is our present condition? What has been our condition for the last fifty years? What has been the direction in which we have tended? Our five hundred thousand bondmen have become four million. The South, besotted, degraded, and barbarized by the increase of the foul institution of slavery, has raised the standard of civil war. America, that was founded by men who fled from oppression, who, while on the stormy deep, signed the first written compact of liberty, and who suffered and became heroic by their fidelity to higher principles of freedom—America, whose songs and whose vaunts of liberty have filled the ear of the world for a hundred years—America is engaged in a bitter civil war, and for no other reason than because half the nation is bent upon establishing on firmer foundations the vilest bondage that ever dehumanized any land!

Such is the condition of the nations of the earth. Such are the things that are taking place in those nations more than eighteen hundred years after the advent of Christ into the world. And God sits patiently and sees the everlasting roll of depravity by which mankind are affected. He beholds the dungeons and the wildernesses. He sees the heart-throes. He hears the groans and the sighs. He knows the desolations and the abominations. The earth is bound up in sin, and God yet bears it and carries those that dwell thereon in his bosom. Think what must be the long-suffering and patience of such a Being!

There are two philosophies of the divine nature, and it makes much difference in our estimate of the patience of God which we adopt. One makes God inaccessible to suffering. False ideas of perfection cause them to lift him above suffering, as if it were a weakness. But this, in fact, either takes away personality, making God an abstraction, or it

represents him as so devoid of sensibility that no man can yearn after or love him. In order to raise God into inconceivable perfectness, philosophers have clothed him with such impassive traits that no man could desire him.

The other view, which is the scriptural view, clothes God with sensibilities, not only as quick as human sensibilities, but vastly more acute, and deep, and strong than men's. Love, and sympathy, and pity are not less real in God than in man, but more real. God is not only as much as man, but more than he in every thing that is excellent. There is no such indignation at dishonor, and meanness, and wickedness as that which dwells in the bosom of God. It is said to *burn to the lowest hell.* Bring before any truly noble man some ineffable meanness, not against himself, but against a helpless one, and he knows what that expression means. He is so affronted by the outrage that his whole better nature is stirred up within him. And if man, who is yet selfish, and drawn toward the earth, can be so aroused at the sight of such things, what must be the tides that move through the heart of God at the sight of the same things! If God be one that says, "I saw the end from the beginning; I know that all is going right, and I will not trouble myself with these matters," we might as well have no God, so far as his influence upon us is concerned; but if he be a Father who declares that there is not a thing that pertains to our welfare of which he is not cognizant and which he does not control, then what must be the nature of the experience of the divine mind, in the world-long administration of his government, over such a race as this!

Thus much in regard to collective man. There is an individual history, likewise, which we shall now approach perhaps with more conscious realization. Every one of us has had a life marked by a long course of divine forbearance, for which no motive can be assigned but love. Consider that slow evolution and education through which many of us have been passing for scores of years. We are not to think of our strug-

gles in life, and of our development, in the light of our own endeavors. There is not one of us that has not been a child, under the government of a father; and God's heart and intelligence have gone with us from the cradle to the present hour. All the instruction and training which we have received he has watched, I will not say with the sensibility and love of an earthly parent, but with a love and sensibility transcendently above any degree of these qualities that an earthly parent is capable of experiencing.

Consider the partial and limited moral result that has been secured by our education. Consider that it has been marked by years of indifference, and worldliness, and resistance, and uselessness, and even, perhaps, great and outbreaking wickedness. Who that remembers his life, or even a part of it, is not impressed with its obliquities? And if a man analyzes his life, he will be still more impressed with these obliquities. Take the history of your reason. Ask yourself, "To what purpose have I employed the powers of my understanding?" What can you show as the fruits of that royal faculty? If you were a husbandman, and were put in charge of a piece of land, you would keep a record of the harvests, and could give an account of your stewardship. Now God has given you that ample field of intelligence, and what can you show as the result of the twenty, or thirty, or forty, or fifty, or sixty years that you have had the tillage of it? What capacity for working out blessings for ourselves and others has God given us in our affections? Have we wrought out through them a result at all answering to that capacity? Although, in looking back upon our career, we can find some things that afford us satisfaction, has not our life been like a tree in an orchard that bears here and there an apple, but that on many of its branches has nothing but leaves? Has it not been like a vine that grows rampant and strong, and is plentiful in wood, but penurious in fruit?

Consider, when called of God, and effectually called, how our Christian life has begun in doubt, and proceeded irregu-

larly, and gone on unproductively; and consider how void, in many respects, it has been down to this hour.

But, more particularly, let every man consider how much of the period of his youth was utterly thrown away. How many of us have entered and gone forward into manhood in violation of the divine commands, and against our own conscience and judgment. There are none of us who, if we should conscientiously pass judgment upon the life that we have led, would not be obliged to acknowledge that in many things we have violated, every day, our own sense of right and duty. A faithful conscience will bear witness that in our past history we have continually gone contrary to what we knew to be in accordance with moral rectitude. We have lived imperfect and guilty lives. To us they are forgotten and gone, but to God they are neither gone nor forgotten. They are written in his eternal remembrance. And he has had to bear and forbear with them, although he has seen them to be a long record of violations of our own light and knowledge, and of his law and love.

Consider how many visitations of God's Spirit we have resisted, how many examples we have disregarded, how many calls we have neglected, and how many divine influences we have withstood. By far the largest number of us have had pious parents. The majority of us were brought up, literally, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and there are many of us who for long years were made conscious of the strivings of God's Spirit with us. Our thoughts and feelings have been leavened. Fear and yearnings have wrought within us. Conscience has rebuked us. The divine influence has fallen upon us like heat upon summer soils. Our souls have been striven with in a thousand ways. Many of us have come down to this time having derived little or no profit from the experience through which we have been called to pass, and many of us have been growing harder and harder.

Consider our perjuries—for I can not call them by any

other name. When you were prostrated by sickness, you made the most solemn vow that if God would spare you, you would give the remainder of your days to his service. He heard you, and complied with your desire; and you returned to health only to dishonor the past, and forget the vow that you had made, and enter upon a new lease of self-indulgence. Consider how, when troubles came like armed men upon you, and your conscience bore witness against you, and the sense of your wickedness overwhelmed you, you promised to be faithful to God if he would relieve you. He relieved you, and you broke your promise. You were in difficulty; your wrong conduct was culminating; it was fast bringing you toward ruin and disgrace; and you prayed to God, saying, "I know my sins; save me, deliver me from disaster this time, and I will devote my life to serving thee in the future;" and you perjured yourself. Our lives are full of promises that are never kept. We have not only made resolutions and broken them, but we have made the most sacred promises that the heart can fashion or that the lips can express, and broken them scores and scores of times; and yet God is not tired of us.

Go back and recount the Sabbaths that have dawned upon you with sweet influences. I would not have my memory of the Sabbaths that have come to me taken away. They have been the sweetest days of my life, as I look back upon them. Although in my childhood on the Sabbath the lazy-footed sun refused to go down, and I was impatient to have the day pass, yet, when I recall its scenes, the memory of it is peculiarly pleasing. Of a Sabbath afternoon the chestnut-hill, the pastures shimmering in the sun, the indolent flocks moving about over them, Mount Tom in the distance, the trees in the fields, and the sounds that filled the air—how wondrously did these and many other things twine together to work a heavenly influence upon my mind! On those Sabbath evenings, when all were away from home but me, and I sat in the door of my father's kitchen, and listened to the old

clock and the crickets, and cried, and did not know what was the matter, the spirit of the Sabbath fell on me with sweet and sacred influence.

Do not you remember the village burying-ground? Did you never walk there on a Sabbath-day? And while gazing upon the glittering white marble that stood over the dust of those that had been dear to you, have you never had thoughts that seemed to swing you out of mortal life, and almost into the spirit land? Do you not remember those solemn funeral days, when some companion was borne to his long home, and you followed, ignorant of the meaning of what you beheld, and yet agitated by the strange scene?

Go back through your Sabbaths. See how many things they have brought to you. See how near they have carried you to the verge of the spiritual realm. See how they have waked up your affections, sweetened your heart, and roused your conscience. Call to mind the privilege which the Sabbath has afforded you in the sanctuary. Remember the teachings, and chantings, and singings that you have enjoyed at the house of God. Remember those Sabbaths when your companions made a profession of their faith in Christ, and sat around the board, and partook of the emblems of the Savior's dying love, and your heart said, "I would give all that I have if I could sit with them." Remember the Sabbath-days when you have looked upon the joy of some poor but faithful worshiper of God, and said to yourself, "I would give all that I possess, and all my prospects of success in this life, if I could only be in that man's place."

Such has been your experience of the Sabbath; and yet many of you have gone through tens, and hundreds, and thousands of them, and many of them have been revival Sabbaths, on which the great congregation was moved and shaken as by a mighty wind, and you have gone through them all, and come out no better, if not worse, than you were in the beginning.

Oh! I should think God would be very tired of his work

with us. There is scarcely a week in which I do not say to myself, "I wonder that God does not get tired of me." This untiring patience of God is to me the most astonishing of all things. Neither his wisdom, nor his power, nor his purity, seems to me so wonderful as that. There is an inevitableness in these things. But ah! nothing is so voluntary as patience. Not letting go men that deserve to be let go; not giving up men that deserve to be given up; holding men that have forfeited all claim upon the divine mercy, through long periods of mercy—this is wonderful. I can understand every thing better than God's patience.

There are many of us who have had still more peculiar sparings than these. I suppose that some of you recollect being carried, in your youth, down in ways of depravity till it seemed as though there was but a hair's breadth between you and utter destruction. I presume that many of you say, "I do not know why I am not in the Five Points to-night." You and I are not any better than some are that have been there. There are baptized women in those purlieus of damnation. Why are they there, and you here? You remember the time when you were carried to the very verge of the precipice, and, you can not tell why, somehow or other, you bore off and took another course, while they went on and over. I suppose that many of you can recollect when the temptation to lying and knavery had almost fastened itself upon you as a habit, and when you were brought to a point where the chances were about as many that you would go down and become a liar and a knave, as that you would reform and be an honest man. When many went down the road of license, and were overthrown, you were recovered. Is it not strange why some do not come back that do not, and why some come back that do, from lives of license and of evil pleasure? One would think that the children of such godly parents as we sometimes see, when led astray, would be restored sooner than the children of godless parents; but such is not always the case. Sometimes the unprayed-for

children come back, and the prayed-for ones do not seem to come back.

Some of you have doubtless been on the way of intemperance, and escaped, and but just escaped, as a bird from the snare of a fowler. When a man has been an intemperate man, and has gained his equilibrium, and fairly escaped, he may say, "I have been to hell, and God has brought me back again." I really think that if your spirit were hurled through the murky air of the dark abyss, and some angel should fly down, saying, "God has had mercy on your spirit, and sent me to rescue you," and should lift you up again, it would not be more marvelous than for a man that has been in the jaws of intemperance to regain his sanity, and strength, and virtuous resolution. Are there none of you who, in their inward consciousness, can say, "I went farther than I meant to; I came to the very verge of the pit of perdition, and God saved me, and brought me back?"

There are some here, I suppose, that have been almost around the world, on sea and land, in all climates, and among all sorts of companions, and sinned with a high hand; and God has revolved the wheel, and you have come back, you have been converted, and you are now walking in ways of pleasantness and peace. Is it not wonderful that you have been thus spared? But where are those that were with you? One after another they have come to an untimely end, hastened on by a career of wickedness and crime. Is there nothing in such a history that ought to arrest a man's attention, and cause him to mark the sparing mercy of God?

Consider, you that are living in sin, that you are not merely resisting your duty, and the requirements of God's law, but your guilt is heinous, from the fact that you have been dealt with so leniently, and for so long a period. You can not realize the extent to which this circumstance aggravates your sin without being condemned by your own conscience. And if your conscience condemns you, how much more must God condemn you, who is greater than your conscience.

Consider, too, the wanton sacrifices, and the degree of moral turpitude, of one that can go down against education; against parental example; against sympathy with Christian companions; against the whole array of the means of grace; against all Sabbath and sanctuary privileges; against special divine workings; against God's providences; and especially against the long-suffering of God, that should of itself lead you to repentance. What a funeral march, what a march to perdition, is the life of some men.

Under such a dispensation, nothing can prevent any man that wants to be saved from being saved. Many men have thought, "I would try to be a Christian if I thought I could succeed." There are more chances of your succeeding in a Christian life than in agriculture, or mechanics, or commerce. When a man attempts to build himself up in commerce, or mechanics, or agriculture, there are many things that may occur to prevent his success; but when a man attempts to live a Christian life, the long-suffering of the Lord God Almighty is a guarantee against his failure. The assurances under the divine administration of mercy are such that no man need despair of success in trying to be a Christian.

Even the chief of sinners may hope for mercy from so patient a Being. Have you given yourself up long ago? My dear friend, God has not given you up. You may have said, "I am a reprobate, and there is no use of my trying to reform; let the young take warning from my example." Perhaps God has spared you on purpose to make you a monument of his grace. Let your example be a monument of grace, and not a monument of warning. Have men given you up? God is more patient than men. Have even your father and mother forsaken you? When your father and mother forsake you, then the Lord will take you up. Have your companions become tired of you, and forsworn your acquaintance? God is not tired of you. There is not a man so steeped in guilt, so debased by crime, so pertinacious in rebellion, or so thoroughly clothed in the garment of sin, that

there is not hope for him, and mercy for him. Not that you deserve any thing, or are entitled to any thing; but you have a God that is long-suffering, that waits to be gracious, and that says to every man, "Though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow." There is no impossibility with God. Only hope and try, and God will help you.

I ask you to remember this view of God when you think that to be called to religious life is a dismal calling. Is it a sad thing to be subject to the control of such a One? He came into this world for your sake. In the person of his Son incarnated, he suffered for you. He laid down his life in your behalf. He made expiation for the sins of each and every one of us. And now, though he has ascended into heaven, he never forgets us. He is a high-priest that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and to-day Jesus Christ reigns for the sake of bringing us home to glory.

Can not you trust, and love, and serve such a Savior? What is your life worth if it is not founded in him? No man can be said to have life who has not a hope of eternal life. No man can be said to have joy who has not the beginning of everlasting joy.

Now, by the mercy of God, by the long-suffering of God, by the kindness of God, I beseech every one of you to turn from evil and take hold upon good, with repentance, with confession, with firm choice, and with determination. Begin to live a life of religious faith and of Christian hope.

X.

The Patience of God.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, April 17th, 1864.

The Patience of God.

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy."—Mic., vii., 18.

Before men conclude to seal up the Old Testament and lay it aside as a document of former ages, no longer suitable to the advanced moral condition and intelligence of the world, they should consider a little its contents. It is true that the record of the Levitical system of worship and the Jewish civil government has chiefly only a historic value. It is true that the genealogical tables are no longer of any special importance to the world. They are dead to us. It is true that much that is in the Prophets was special to the age to which it was addressed, and has to us a secondary value. But while the elements that were local and special to one people and one age no longer have to us the importance which they had to them to whom they were first delivered, yet other portions contain universal truths—that is, truths that belong to men every where and in every age. Love, and its essential wants, joys, sorrows, the literature of those sorrows, universal afflictions, remorse, yearnings after goodness—in short, all the moral sentiments and all the natural affections are the same under all governments, under all laws, and in every age; and the Scriptures that relate to these things are perennial. They never grow old. They are not relative to any one age. They are alike to all. If you cast into oblivion the Psalms of David, you throw away the best

literature of the feelings that has ever appeared in human language; and whence can you replace it? If you take out of our language those Psalms, and the meditations which they have inspired, what will be left to express the deepest and the most exalted of all the feelings which man can entertain? The noblest application of moral principles to human affairs are to be found in the Prophets. Ever since good men have hated evil, and sought to reform and ennoble the state, they have found their inspiration in the Prophets. If the Gospel of Christ gave to the world a new radical doctrine of the worth of man as an individual creature, the Prophets gave to the world the noblest inspirations for just government and pure administration in human affairs.

But there is one vein that is so far above any which I have mentioned that it seems scarcely worth while to linger upon these details, important as they are. Let one ask himself where he will find a substitute for that sublime conception of God that pervades the Old Testament. Earlier than all others it stood forth. Successive ages have corroborated it, but have added nothing to it. The sublime transactions of the New Testament have been instances under it and exemplifications of it; but there are not, even in the New Testament, any descriptions of God that in majesty, and completeness, and symmetry, and harmony, go beyond and higher than those contained in the oldest parts of the Old Testament. Let me read you that which we can never read enough—the description which was given to Moses:

"The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation."

Where can you find any description of a moral governor more sublime? or where any intimations of a moral government more admirable? Our theologies scarcely yet aspire to deal with that which was so early and so clearly set forth. Civilizations, one after another, have arisen—the Egyptian, which was then in progress, the Assyrian, the Grecian, the Roman, and the modern—in each and all of which new elements of manhood have been evolved; but, with the result of them all before you, go back four hundred thousand years, and what will you add, or what subtract from, this sublimest description of God? It would seem as if on the morning of the human race God looked forth and inspired the sacred penman to limn his portrait, which has since overhung the world, not a line effaced nor a color grown dim. One by one the patriarchs lived and died, and new teachers took their places, while holy men, and judges, and prophets came; and yet all sounded the same truth, beheld the same sublime Jehovah, and set forth, without jar or discord, from end to end of the Old Testament Scriptures, this very view of God, first good and loving, and alternatively just and punitive, which Moses beheld in the desert, and which, with God's Word for our glass, we now begin to be able to perceive in all the aspects of nature itself.

One of these divine elements comes before us this morning in the text which we have chosen, namely, God's great patience with men, and his spirit of forgiveness. It is to this that I wish now to call your attention. The range of God's patience is so great, and the circumstances of it are so different from our own human experiences, that our chief difficulty in speaking of it lies in its vastness.

We are to consider, in the first place, in approaching this subject, that our sin is not so much a violation of a law that lies outside of the bosom of God, as it is a disregard of the feelings and nature of God himself. You will, by a moment's reflection, see that there is a marked distinction between personal feeling infringed upon and law transgressed. The mag-

istrate sits upon the bench, and a culprit is brought before him. There are two ways in which that culprit may be considered as transgressing. He may have broken the law of the land, which the magistrate represents officially, but not personally. The magistrate regards him as a culprit, to be sure. But suppose that, in the exercise of truth and justice by a pure administration or decision, the magistrate arouses the anger of the culprit, and he insults him to his face and in his own court, is there any difference between his former crime, which was the violation of the law of the land, and his later crime, which is an outrage upon the feeling of the magistrate, acting as a magistrate?

When you employ men in your affairs, you know that there is a distinction between the disregard of the rules of business and a personal disagreement with yourself. You know that when a man offends you personally the provocation is sharper and harder to be borne than when he breaks over stated rules. We know that a child may violate the laws of morality as they are established by the Word of God and by the consent of the community, that he may violate the civil laws of the land in which he dwells, that he may violate the rules and regulations of a well-ordered family, and yet, though all these courses of conduct are grievous wrongs which shock the parent, not be as culpable as when he willfully treads on the feelings of the parent. There are sins in committing which the child flies, as it were, against the heart of the father and mother, and does not so much violate their command as their living feeling; he sins against law in its very sources; and we all know that this is regarded as more intolerable and more flagrant than simply setting aside and forgetting or transgressing a law. In other words, it is possible to break a statute—that is one kind of transgression. It is possible, also, to sin by directly striking against the heart and the feeling—that is another kind of transgression, and one that is considered more stinging, more intolerable, and more unforgivable than any other.

Now God and his law are one—one in such a sense that when we offend against his moral law, we offend against his own personal feeling. He is not a magistrate for whom a system has been framed, and to the administration of which he comes, under a sense of justice. He is a universal Father, administering according to his own instincts, his own tastes, his own affections, his own feelings, among his children. God's law is God's own very self, pervading the universe, and our transgression is a personal affront of God himself. Just as when your taste, or your love, or your conscience is violated by the direct act of another person against yourself, the offense is greater than if any exterior canon were broken, so it is when we violate the divine commands.

In this light, consider how every man sins every day of his life, and with every single faculty, against God's taste, against his conscience, against his love, against his kindness—that is, offends them, disgusts them, if I might so say. For, although I do not hold to the doctrine of total depravity, if by that is meant that all men sin alike all the time as much as they can, so that every thing they do is bad, I do hold to the view that there is not a single faculty that is at work in the human mind that is not an offender. There is not a single part or power of our nature with which we have not committed sin, and with which we do not commit it from day to day. Every single one of all the multiplied faculties of the human mind is made the instrument of offense to the feeling of God.

In many things our actions in this direction have become tendencies, and these tendencies have become habits, so that men transgress God's feelings—that is, God's laws—habitually and regularly, until there is an organized and systematic wrong-doing.

This is begun early, and is continued through life, so that there are innumerable evils, and wrongs, and insults, and grievous injuries, against God's feelings, in the history of every single man. And it is impossible but that God must pass by transgressions, as he is represented as doing. "Who is a

God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" There is not a wise parent in the world that is not obliged to pass by a great deal of the wrong which his child does. It would not be wise administration in a parent not to do it. God sets us the example. There are thousands of things that children do, or say, or omit, which it is not best for the parent to interfere with. It is best for the parent not to seem to see many things that he does see, to pass by or to be lenient with many things, and to bring to bear discipline upon the child only so far as he sees that the child will be profited by it, not adhering to an abstract and absolute idea of justice and of right. And we are taught respecting God that although men sin against him with every faculty of their minds, and carry on transgression, I had almost said, by the necessity of their nature, continuously, God passes it by, and does not seem to heed it—and that, too, out of a spirit of wisdom, as well as of infinite compassion and benevolence.

Consider that this is the case with each individual man, and that this is the case with nations, and that God is surrounded, so far as this world is concerned, by myriads of beings every one of whom must needs make himself a burden to him by the violation of the divine thought, and taste, and feeling — of all that is highest, and noblest, and purest — of that which God loves as his own being, and by which he means to build up the universe, and to make the final heaven, and the glorious paradisiacal condition! Men have been living in a perpetual violation of all the thoughts and feelings of God's mind, generations have been, whole nations have been, the race has been; and for thousands and thousands of years God has administered in the midst of creatures on earth, every one of whom, by every pulsation of feeling, has been doing things unspeakably offensive and ineffably disgusting to him. Yet the race has thriven; and there have been joys, and mercies, and blessings; there have been reforming and stimulating influences developed in the

world. And these things explain what is meant when in the Old Testament God is spoken of as being so patient—that is, so *long-suffering.* He suffers with men and endures them; and the reason given is that "he delighteth in mercy." He is a being that is so tender, so loving, so gentle, and so gracious, that though he is, and has been for ages, surrounded by those that are playing upon the exquisite divine sympathy with offense, and with conduct that is evil and disgustful, yet he is so ineffably good that by the love he bears he is able to endure and to be patient with this monstrous and universal transgression. "He delighteth in mercy." That is, he delights to be kind. Kindness harmonizes with his nature. It is the strongest tendency, the first emotion of his mind. It deflects toward justice, but straightway it comes back again to its original true feeling of mercy and love. The mother intermits her smiles to chastise the child, but when the chastisement is over she comes back again to the feelings of maternal tenderness. And so it is with the divine nature. "God is love." And although at times, in the spirit of love, and for the purposes of love, he is severe and punitive, he returns again, by the necessities of his own nature, to loving kindnesses and tender mercies.

Consider the literature of this kindness as it is repesented in the Bible—for, although I can but glance at one or two passages, there is a whole literature of the divine emotions. Consider God's readiness to forgive and to forget. "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." You will observe that this readiness is in marked contrast with men's conduct, who require to be mollified toward an enemy. You will observe that all the way through the Old Testament, although God is justly offended, and indignant at man's conduct, he is represented as the One that needs no persuasion. Men are the ones that need persuasion. Now, when we are grievously offended—not when men do wrong against us at points at which we are not sensitive, but when we are touched in our very personal-

ity, so that we feel that our honor is involved in the wrong-doing—we are very reluctant to forgive; but God is declared to be full of such patience, of such gentleness, and of such love, that he is always ready to forgive. The impulse and the motive are within him. "He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." I have heard of men that had debts owed to them, that held notes, and bonds, and mortgages, and that, for reasons of kindness, burnt these evidences of the debts. They were consumed. They were taken out of the way. Next to burning, a thing is lost and utterly gone if a man sinks it into the depths of the sea. And we are taught that, as when a man casts a thing overboard, and sinks it out of sight, so that no man can find it, so, when God forgives a sin or transgression, he so utterly forgives it that it is gone from him and is lost forever!

He is not only merciful, but he is magnanimous, for he not only forgives utterly, and absolutely, and thoroughly, and is eager and ready to forgive those that transgress against his feelings, and long-suffering, and patience, but he declares that he will forget the transgression. Now there are a great many of us who can *forgive* a thing, but who can not forget it. I know there is a phrase that says "Forgive and forget;" and we do forgive and forget peccadilloes, little trifling offenses—though the forgetting usually comes before the forgiveness; but there are some things that touch us, and goad us, and of which we say, "Christ forgave, and he says that I must forgive, and I will forgive; but when they ask me to *forget*, I never can." Now forgiveness, when the thing forgiven is not forgotten—that is to say, where it hangs in the memory like a painted portrait, distinct in all the features—eyes, nose, mouth, and ears—such forgiveness I should very much doubt the genuineness of. It is not according to the human mind to remember what it has really forgiven.

What were the offenses which my child committed ten

years ago, and for which I called him to account? I recollect that there was some discipline in my family then. I recollect in general that about that time there were improper acts that were thought to be a sufficient cause for punishing the child, but I have forgotten what they were. If any one of my children should come to me and say, "Father, do you recollect that when I was six years old such and such things happened?" I should be obliged to say that I did not. Love quarrels are proverbial for their evanescence. They fade out like the clouds from the heavens when the wind sweeps them away utterly, so that there is no mark left to show where they have been. Do you not see any signs in the human mind that men know how, when wrongs have been done, to forgive them in such a way that after a little the thing itself seems gone. Let me saw off a branch from one of the trees that is now budding in my garden, and all summer long there will be an ugly scar where the gash has been made; but by next autumn it will be perfectly covered over by the growing; and by the following autumn it will be hidden out of sight; and in four or five years there will be but a slight scar to show where it has been; and in ten or twenty years you would never suspect that there had been an amputation.

Trees know how to overgrow their injuries, and hide them; and love does not wait so long as trees do; it knows how to throw out all divine and beneficent juices, as it were, and hide from sight the wrongs done. God says he forgives in the same way. He will never again make mention, as he declares in Ezekiel to his people, of their sins. He will never taunt them with them.

You do not need to say a word to a man that has done you a wrong to make him feel that you remember it against him. You may say, "Let it pass," and still it will be in your power to cast upon him a look which he shall feel, and which will say more than volumes could of that wrong. How many times have husbands forgiven their wives, and wives

their husbands, and parents their children, and children each other, when they have committed any offense, only, in a moment's anger, afterward to call that offense up again, and make it the occasion of taunting and abuse! But God says that he will never make mention of your transgressions, that he will cast them into the depths of the sea. There is a royalty in the divine love and patience such that when God has said once of a thing, "It is passed," it *is* passed; it is annihilated; it is moved even beyond the memory that forgets nothing except sins in his children. Every thing else is fixed and eternized when it falls upon the divine mind. But offenses committed by us against him, these, on our repentance and turning from them, fade out of his mind. They will not hold their color, but blanch white in the light of the sun of righteousness.

Not only does God not mention men's transgressions, but he says explicitly, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." There are sins, he declares, of which, if you were to go to God and ask him about them, he would say, "I have forgotten all about them. I do not know them. They are gone from my remembrance."

Consider what it is to have such a Being as this at the centre of power and administration, forever seeking the good of every living creature, and living for that very end; not sitting serene, meditative, tranquil, for the luxury of perfection, or for self-enjoyment. The most intensely thoughtful and the most intensely active of any being in the universe is God; and all the power, and all the majesty of his administration are for the production of good every where; and every violation of his wishes is a violation of a tendency toward the production of good. He is never weary of his work. Such is our God, who, by the whole personal influence of his being, by all his wishes, thoughts, and feelings, is perpetually planning how to raise about him in this world, and in other worlds, if there be any that are populated, those intelligences that shall approach to him in power of thought,

and moral excellence, and perfectness of joy. This is God's avocation.

I bless God that in this work he will meet those that attempt to traverse it, and will not clear the guilty. He makes himself at once our Physician and our Nurse, and he gives his medicine out of his own heart to those that will be healed of him. But those that sin because they love iniquity, and will persist in it, that are incorrigible, that will not repent and turn from wrong—God will not clear them, but will show himself to be their adversary.

We think it would be wrong to attribute to God such tender compassion as mothers feel; we shrink from transferring to God the interior and most exquisite passages of the history of the household, because it seems to us that there must be incompatibility between personal administration in the family and civil administration in a state government. But this is wrong; for we are to gain our conceptions of God himself from the noblest faculties of man. We are to take the best thoughts and the best feelings of human beings, and from these we are to derive our highest views of God; and in doing this, every thought, every figure, which we apply to him, inclines us to take the family and its experiences as the source of information respecting him. Those things that are farthest from animal life, those things that indicate the most exquisite experiences of affection in the mother and in the father, are the very ones which we should transfer to God, and should believe that he possesses.

In view, then, of this brief statement concerning the character of God, and his feelings toward men that are sinning and trespassing against him, I remark,

1. This conception of God should quicken every moral sensibility, and make a life of sin distasteful and painful to us. It is one thing to sin against a government, and another thing to sin against a being. There are a great many children that will sin against the family arrangements who would not sin against their mother. The mother says, "My dear

child, you know your father has made a law in this family that such and such things shall not be done, and you know you have broken that law three or four times; now, for my sake, avoid breaking it again;" and the child feels, when the mother interposes herself, that there is something that touches him which did not when it was only a law of the family that he was violating.

Now God puts himself in just that position, and the motive of obedience and righteousness is this: that God is the tenderest, the most patient, the gentlest, and the dearest friend that we have; that he knows every thing, within and without; and that, though we are sinful and wicked, he in his infinite compassion and mercy forgives us, and says, "Do not sin against me nor against mine." It is this conception of sinning against God as a person that has always been the most powerful restraint with me, and that I have found to be the most powerful with other men. This is one of the reasons why I have attempted to rid you of the idea of a God embodied in laws, and to cultivate the idea of a personal God, whose thoughts and feelings constitute his laws. When you consider that right-doing pleases God, and that wrong-doing displeases him, it quickens the conscience through the feeling of love, and should make you more sensitive to disobedience than merely the thought of transgressing God's law, as if it were something apart from himself. Can there be raised up before the mind a conception more stimulating, or one that shall more effectually win and wean a man from wrong, and lift him toward that which is right, than this scriptural view of God which represents him as so ineffably gentle, so wonderfully patient, so sweet-minded, and so intent upon men's good, as the means of their glory?

2. There is in this presentation of God's character an argument against a dishonorable reliance on God's goodness as a reason for persistence in sinning. "Shall we continue in sin," says the apostle, "that grace may abound?" He has been opening this view of grace in Christ Jesus, and showing

that he forgives transgression and sin; and now he assumes the language of the objector, and says, "Why, if God forgives sin, when a man has stopped sinning and repented, can not he go on and sin again, and then repent again, and be forgiven?"

When men are bent upon wrong, there is always a strong tendency to accept those views of God which represent him as not very just, but very kind—so kind that behind his kindness they may gain some security in their wrong courses. And when God's long-suffering and patience are set forth, such men often say, "Well, if God is so tender and loving, I need not be in haste to leave off my evil ways; he will bear with me a little longer, and I do not believe he will be severe with me for my petty transgressions." Men deliberately employ God's mercy and goodness as an argument for disobedience. Now I can imagine that a man might fleece and swindle me in a hundred shrewd ways, and I might bear with him. But suppose I should find a man seemingly sick and suffering from hunger, and at great inconvenience I should take him up, bring him into my house, give him the best that I had, nurse him day after day, making him as a child under my roof, and serving his comfort in every possible way; and suppose, after about a week, he should get up in the night, availing himself of this confidence of my family, and rob me, and walk out of my dwelling, I think it would be hard for me to bear with that. I do not know of any thing that is more wicked than for a man to draw out a person's beneficence toward him, and then avail himself of that person's generosity as a means of injuring him. That is infernal; it is inhuman, because kindness seems to lay almost every man under a debt of gratitude. A dog, even, feels itself laid under a debt of gratitude by kindness. It is only men who are so corrupt that they would ever think of making goodness, and generosity, and kindness toward them the ground and reason of a base requital. And yet hundreds say, "God is good, and we will go on a little while longer in sin."

Yes, he is infinitely good. He has been patient with you; he has longed for you; he has sent ten thousand invisible mercies to you, besides those visible mercies which he showered upon you; he has been long-suffering and forgiving; he has sunk in the depths of the sea thrice ten thousand transgressions; he did it yesterday, he is doing it to-day, and he will do it to-morrow; and shall you argue with yourself that because God is so good you will go on and insult him, and wound him, and injure him? or shall the goodness of God lead you to repentance and to newness of life? I beseech of you, for the sake of honor and manhood, do not tread upon God's goodness, and generosity, and magnanimity to offend him more.

3. Consider, in the light of this discourse, how we ought to forgive each other when we have been offended one by another. There is no man that lives who sinneth not; and there is no man that lives who sinneth not against his neighbor and his friend. We dash ourselves upon each other, not only by ignorance, but by forgetfulness, by stress of temptation, by anger, by passion, by various feelings. If perfectness in our relations was the indispensable condition of high and noble friendship, there could be no such thing on earth as high and noble friendship. We are all the time afflicting each other, and sinning more or less against each other.

Now contrast our ordinary mode of forgiveness with that of our God. You will recollect that Christ, when he had given his disciples a form of prayer, made a commentary upon it. The only commentary he made was on the subject of forgiveness. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." As I grow older, and know more of life, I learn to wonder at the extent of man's anger and implacableness. Our forgiveness is generally selfish. It seeks our own good, and not the offender's. God's forgiveness is benevolent. He seeks not his own good, but the good of those whom he for-

gives. Our forgiveness is slow, grudging, and reluctant. It is wrung out of us, very frequently, only by the mediation of friends. God's forgiveness is ever ready. Not the arms of a mother ever opened so quick to her repentant child as God's heart opens to us. He—the highest, the noblest, and the best—forgiving impurity, wickedness, transgression, and injustice. We, that ourselves are offenders, are the ones that refuse to forgive those that offend against us. Being ourselves but just forgiven, we turn to him that has offended against us, and take him by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest." Is there to be no lesson learned from God's treatment of us?

An unforgiving spirit puts a man farther from God than any other thing. It is one of those dispositions that provoke even God to retaliation. I think it is often far more criminal before God than that sin over which it domineers. It is a perilous thing for a man to carry in his heart a spirit that refuses to forgive. And when you forgive, let the forgiveness be large; let it be thorough; let it be like that which God, for Christ's sake, has afforded you.

I have known families where the father and daughter had not spoken to each other for months. I have known partners that had some disagreement, and could not meet each other peaceably. They were both professing Christians, but they did not sit at the same table, since one went to one church, and the other to another. I have known men, who were avowed Christians, that would not walk on the same side of the road with each other. I have known difficulties, that were simply difficulties of the hand or the purse, that did not touch a man's higher nature, that arose out of the meanest provocations, which men would not adjust, could not forgive—men professing to be Christians! Here is the royal lore of divine conduct, of the glorious majesty of mercy, of the wonderful richness of that love which, rolling out of the heart of God as from an inexhaustible fountain, covers down human transgression; all this is before men; and yet, though

they bear the sacred name of Christ, they carry within them a cankerous heart of unforgiveness—and that with reference to little, petty, trifling affairs that are hardly worthy of a thought. The very dust of life turns us to such bitterness, often, that we are toward our fellow-men in the same attitude which Satan is in toward us—that of "accusers of the brethren." Oh! how little have we learned of the spirit of Christ. Until we have learned to forgive so thoroughly that the heart, instead of fostering bitterness and animosity, has become a heart that would nurse, and that would bless, we can not be said to be true and faithful exemplars of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

4. In this view of God there is encouragement to all who are honestly seeking to live a godly life. There are a great many persons that would fain become Christians if they thought they should persevere. Do you then suppose that Christ called you into his kingdom, saying, "I will help you in, but when you are once in you must take care of yourself?" Of course you will not be a consistent Christian. You will sin as long as you live. If any man comes to me and says, "Now I am willing to be called a Christian, and I want to join your church, for I think that I am in a state in which I can live a perfectly Christian life," I say to him, "Go away. We do not want you. We have no arrangements for such folks." God sent us to conduct an institution and economy which has in view the healing of the people. If there is any body that needs healing, we have the means with which to heal him. I am, we will suppose, a physician having charge of a hospital. There comes one who has been struck by a bullet, and whose breast is terribly lacerated. I say, "Pass him into ward No. 6," and away he goes. Here comes another man, bandaged and limping. His arm is broken, and he has received a severe wound in the leg. I give directions for him to be taken to ward No. 7. Presently there comes up a brisk, fine-looking fellow, who says, "I wish you would let me go in." "What is the

matter with you?" I ask. "Oh, nothing," he says; "I am fit to go in; I am all right in every respect." "Then you can not go in," I say. "This is not the place for people with whom there is nothing the matter. It is not a tavern; it is a hospital."

Now many people go to church as a rich man from the South goes to a hotel. He has his big boxes, his trunks, his wife, his children, and plenty of money, and he wants to find commodious apartments. Many people think that if they have clothes, and a good supply of money, and are well-appearing and good-paying boarders in the hotel of the Church, they are just the kind that we want. We do not want any such folks. We have too many of them already! This, in respect to a man's qualifications for entering the Church, falsifies the fundamental idea of Christianity; for we look upon men, and know that they are fallible, imperfect, and that, by the force of evil passions from within, and the pressure of temptations from without, imperfection has wrought itself into sins in innumerable instances. Habit is so powerful, sympathy is so strong, the allurements of the world are so engaging, and the Prince of the power of the air is so wise an administrator, that we know perfectly well that every living man sins, and will sin.

But ah! we have a Physician for him; and if he knows that he sins, if his heart is sick of sinning, and he despairs of getting over it, if he is penitent, and earnestly desires to enter upon a course of right living, then we will take him by the hand. Why? Because he is so good? No; because he is so bad. Do you suppose that if I were going out to teach those that needed teaching, I would go to Dr. Leiber, who knows more in his hand than I know in my whole body? I would go to some little ragamuffin that could not say his A B C, and I would go to him because he was so ignorant. His ignorance would be the ground on which I should go to him. The condition of joining a school that I should open would be that the applicants should not know too much. Ignorance is the

qualification for entering a school, as sickness is the qualification for entering a hospital. And if a man comes into the Church, it is on the ground, not that he is perfect, so that we can afford to paint his portrait, and hang it up in the gallery of saints, but that he is imperfect. If a man says to me, "My self-esteem sins, my selfish propensities sin, my understanding sins, my affections sin, my moral sentiments sin—I am sick of this sinning; I am tired of the wicked life that I am leading, and I long for some help," "Ah!" I say, "behold the God that you need." Let me read this description of him again:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

Do any of you want such a God? Are there any of you that are willing, under such conditions, to live a life of righteousness? I call for scholars for the school of the Lord Jesus Christ! For there is a great school opened, and there is a great Teacher. He proposes to enlighten the understanding, to awaken the affections, and to develop the moral sentiments; and he declares that he will do it gently and with tenderness. Does any body want to go to school to Christ? I call for disciples—for the meaning of disciples is *scholars*—for Christ's school. Are there any that want to learn of the Savior? Hark to his invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

XI.

God's Husbandry.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath evening, October 16th, 1859.

God's Husbandry.

"Ye are God's husbandry."—1 Cor., iii., 9.

So large and various are spiritual truths that they can not be fully expressed by any one formula of words, or by any single illustration. Repetition, in endless varieties, therefore, is the method of instruction in the Bible. One class of natural objects gives one shade of truth; another class adds to it something else; and, by continuous and varying illustration, there is some approximation to the whole truth. But, at best, it is only an approximation. An exhaustive statement of even the smallest spiritual truths can not be made in human language; and if it were, it could not be received by the human mind. All that are well instructed are obliged to say, with Paul himself, in respect to the fullest disclosures, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." Only when that state which is perfect shall come, shall we know as we are known.

In the passage which I have selected, the apostle declares that Christians are God's husbandry. He likens the work of grace carried on in the human soul by the divine love and power to the operations of the farmer. In varying my methods of instruction that you may not be weary, I have thought that I might, perhaps, to-night, without being charged with fancifulness, follow out this figure; and, if I teach no new truths, I may at least, by an extended analogy, attract attention to old ones, which is far better.

1. The first condition of the soil—its wilderness condition,

as you all know, is not without growths, and not without growths that have some degree of utility. Nevertheless, the natural growths of the soil must give way before there can be civilized husbandry. The land is, in its native state, overgrown with forests, choked with underbrush, and cumbered with fallen and decaying materials. The sun is always hidden from its interior. It is apt to be a lair of beasts—a refuge of wolves, and bears, and foxes—of owls, and hawks, and every uncomely thing.

This is certainly the state of the human soil before religious culture is applied to it. It is eminently so of the barbarous and heathen nations of the earth, which are gigantically fruitful of growths—but of wild growths, useless or pernicious, or both. It is so, in a modified sense, of the thousands of men in Christian communities who are but externally restrained by Christianity, and whose passions, appetites, and habits are wild, gross, and untamed. This is the condition of all men alike. Though they vary in degree of mental resources as one piece of ground varies from another piece in degree of fertility, yet there is a general sameness among them: they are in a state of wilderness in the beginning.

2. The first step of husbandry is to relieve the soil of these wild growths, and prepare it for tillage. The era is of the ox, in the beginning. A long labor is required, and laborious indeed is the task. One of two ways is usually pursued. One part of the soil is ordinarily, as it is said, "cut off clean." The trees are felled, and then gathered together and burned, that the ground may be disencumbered and laid open to the sun. But some, for expedition, are only girdled. All connection between the sap at the roots and the top is severed by a line of sharp cuts around the trees; and so girdled, they will stand and carry through the summer the leaves already out, but they will never leave again. When thus they have been left, gradually growing weaker and weaker, and decaying, the very winds help the farmer by overturning his trees for him, and giving space for the air and sunlight, so that, lit-

tle by little, more and more ground is susceptible to the plow.

The first work of religion in the human soul is analogous to this. It is to cut up the grosser processes of life; it is to destroy the worst forms of evil habits; it is to cleanse men of vices, to rid them of vile associates, to cure them of evil dispositions; it is to drive away all the works of darkness. Many of the things which men practice in an unregenerate state are, by the power of God's grace at their conversion, cut down peremptorily and taken out of the way. But there are a great many things that must yet disappear from the human soul before God's husbandry is completed—things that in the beginning are only girdled. They hold some leaves for a single season; they hold their trunk and branches several seasons, and only little by little are they toppled over and brought to the ground.

3. When the process is complete—this preliminary process—the pioneer farmer is ready for the next stage, which is that of seed-planting. It is not smooth sward that his plow is now to turn—no mellow field, which it is a pleasure to plow; it is rough soil, full of the green stumps of trees but just disappeared. And, worse than this, roots are coiled, and netted, and matted all over the ground, and all through it; and the furrow must be shallow; and only in spots can it be made at that, and very imperfect at the best—wretchedly crooked; but yet there is a furrow skimmed through the field, that shall be some sort of refuge for seed. The ground is, at any rate, open to the sun. Every year will bring away more of these decaying stumps; every plowing will rip up and throw out some of these roots, infixed in the earth; and every wind will bring down some of those tall, gaunt, leafless, girdled trees, that yet encumber the soil. It is a very poor show, to be sure; but then it is a beginning, and that is a good deal in some things.

And so it is with men. Their first efforts at goodness are very crooked and shallow, like a man's furrow in a newly-

plowed piece of ground. There are men that look back and say, "When we dwelt as trappers and hunters in the wilderness, there was some comeliness to our wild life, rude though it was; but, now that we have essayed regular husbandry, look at our bleak fields; look at our wretched processes; look how dismal the farm is!" Well, it is dismal. So, when men first begin to reform from their grosser passional vices—when the indolent man begins to be industrious and to work; when the drinking man begins to reform and turn to the virtues of temperance; when the obscene and salacious imagination begins to cleanse itself; when men begin to let go of the lower forms of wickedness, and to sow the higher seeds of virtue—when these things take place, it is often like the sudden taking away of the forest, and the laying open of the soil to the sun. The first crops are very thin, very poor, very unsatisfactory; yet these incipient steps must be taken, if you are going to have a good farm by-and-by.

4. The good husbandman does not attempt to do all things at once. Having gone thus far, usually the home-lot—the place where his house is to be built—is cleared. There he lays out all his strength. With renewed industry, he clears away the stones, roots out the stumps, and smooths and grades the ground—a little piece, say an acre, where his house is to be. Then next to this, and nearest to his home, lot after lot, ten-acre after ten-acre, he begins to give a more thorough farming. He begins to get what are called the *home-lots* into a better condition, letting the outlying ones go with ruder culture. Those nearest the house are first subdued. Every year he puts more and more work upon them, bringing them gradually into a better and better condition.

So men usually begin to correct their faults, and smooth down those traits of their character which lie next to themselves, as it were, and which are in the family. The later Christian attainments are, so to speak, outlying yet. They make a little place where they can live. Then one and another habit is attacked, and trait after trait is added.

And so they enlarge, more and more, every year, their husbandry.

5. Hitherto only the great staples have been put into the farm—the grains and roots absolutely needed for sustenance. But now, the first work being somewhat advanced, this beginning farmer considers other things. He plans a garden; not altogether for esculent things either, but for flowers as well. He sets out an orchard. He even considers the claims of beauty; and a door-yard appears. Beds of flowers are seen, and vines begin to twine around the lintels of the door.

There is a close analogy to this in spiritual life. At first it is a tough, hard fight for life, and men are doubtful what will be the result. They then begin to reap a higher experience, and to taste some fruits of Christian dispositions. By-and-by they begin to have times of richer gladness—more liberty, more hope. Prayer grows out of the form of duty into the form of pleasure. God's Word opens like a garden gate, and they walk amid beds of flowers. They reach up their hands, and pluck down clusters of fruit—richer experiences—the fruits of the Spirit. They have an orchard, but it is young yet. Only one or two trees bear at all, and these bear but one or two apples apiece. But these single fruits on the boughs of a solitary tree here and there are promises and prophecies of that which is to come; and they look on them with the spirit of hope, and see not what is, but what soon shall be.

6. But when a man has gone thus far, and has leisure, and experience, and confidence, gained from success, he begins, if he be a good husbandman, to take an inventory of his whole place, and he determines that now he will bring in every acre. All outlying lots are to be cleared. Many acres of rocky soil, hitherto neglected till time and means would enable him to bring them into a state of cultivation, must now be subdued. Many low and swampy places, hitherto untouched, must be drained. He is able to do it now; he was not before. Besides, he has a plan, now, for his whole farm.

He sees it, not just around his home; he sees it, not as just enough for a livelihood, but as an estate—a thing of beauty as well as profit, to be made symmetrical in every part.

So, eminently, is it with advanced and advancing Christians. After a time many men experience a second conversion, as it seems to them. After they have advanced a certain way, they seem to be broken up anew. They have a sense of the completeness of Christian character. They assail certain states of mind, feelings, habits, inert affections, rugged dispositions — all things that are outlying — with a new zeal. They are aroused to a sense of the largeness and symmetry of Christian character in a way that they did not know in the beginning. God often reveals the whole idea of Christian living — its fullness, symmetry, perfectness, and beauty—in such a way that men feel that they never before knew what Christianity was. Nothing is more frequent than for men to say, "All my past experience was illusory," simply because it was so imperfect and low. "Now, at last," they say, "I begin to know what it is to be a Christian." And their purpose is to subdue every thought and every feeling to the will of God.

7. But the farmer, advanced so far, begins now, as his last step, to apply to his soil, thus brought forward, the most scientific methods of ascertained husbandry. He underdrains the whole of his estate—for now he has the capital to do it with—and never less than four feet deep, if he be wise; for deep draining, whether in the heart or in the soil, is very excellent, and shallow draining is very poor—better than nothing, but only that. And when he has his land underdrained thoroughly, so that all those stagnant pools, and all those cold and chilling springs that deluge the roots of tender-growing plants are carried away, then he subsoils. Before, he had only skimmed the surface of the ground, sometimes because the roots would not let him go deeper, and sometimes because it was cheaper, and he had not time to do his work more thoroughly; but now, having time and means for

the most thorough culture, he puts down the plow as far as iron can go, and mellows the soil and the subsoil down deep in the earth. Then he begins to select better herbs than before. In the beginning he took whatever he could get, but now he will have only the finer seeds for planting. The old buildings must give way, one by one, to new and better structures, both for his own dwelling and the dwellings of his tenants—for he begins to have tenants now.

And just so it is with Christians. As they grow in grace, and as God, the great Husbandman, perfects the work of clearing up and bringing into a condition of complete tillage the human heart, the religious feelings grow deeper. Many of those causes which obstructed their growth are now drained and carried off from the soul. Many passions are utterly stanched and healed which before deluged the tender-growing experiences. Men give themselves more thorough religious cultivation. More and more do they feel how important is heart-culture above all earthly interests. And the later periods of Christian experience are by far the most assiduous and the most faithful.

8. There are several thoughts which may be brought in here, miscellaneously, before we pass on to make an application of our subject.

We may perceive, from what has been said, the difference between instantaneous beginnings and gradual developments. No man ever suddenly cleared up forty acres of land. A man may *begin* such a work suddenly. No man ever begun to do a thing without making up his mind to do it. There is an instant of time in which he says "I will do it." That is instantaneous; but the *doing* requires a long period.

And so it is in Christian life. No man ever began to be a Christian without a volition; and no volition was ever any thing but a flash—an instantaneous thing. But the mere volition is only a beginning. The evolution of Christian character is gradual. Many men say, "I do not believe

in the idea of a man being all wicked to-day, and all good to-morrow." Neither do I. But do you not believe that a man who to-day gives himself up freely to that which is wicked, may say to-morrow, "I will, from this time, deny myself that which is bad, and undertake to do that which is good?" The purpose is changed; that step in the work of reformation is instantaneous; but the thing to be accomplished must be brought about gradually—it must go on through days, and weeks, and months, and even years, before it can be consummated.

In like manner we can understand somewhat the meaning of succession in Christian experience. We know that in husbandry, until some things are done, other things can not be reached. There is an order of nature. There is no such thing as plowing till the forest is cut off; there is no such thing as planting till the plowing has taken place; and there is no such thing as reaping till growth has given you a crop. And though you may abate the time between one operation and another, you can not do all these things on one and the same plane.

And as there must be an order of succession in natural things, so there must be an order of succession or development in Christian experience and Christian life which nothing can disarrange. We can not anticipate those graces which come only after the ripening of preceding graces. We are to labor for them, but only as the farmer does, knowing that things must go through an appointed evolution and development. Graces grow just as grains do; first the seed sprouting under the ground, then the blade coming to the top of the ground, then the stem appearing, then the unripe ear, then the ripening kernels, and at last the full ears of yellow, golden grain.

Again, we perceive that the hardest part in both kinds of husbandry is apt to come at the beginning, but that, if well met then, it grows easier and easier every successive year. How hard was it at first to bring the soil to such a state

that you dared to think "plow!" and how hard is it for a man at first to bring himself into such a state that he dares to think "prayer!" How, when the plow was first put into the ground, it bounded out, striking stones, and throwing itself hither and thither, and the holder with it! and how, when a man cuts his first furrows of grace, he is slung about hither and thither, and made to be a great deal more nimble than he wishes to be! Yet, after ten years have passed, look upon that same operation in the field. Now, as the man plows, he whistles, and sings, and watches the birds, and only now and then takes account of the furrow. The ox scarcely sweats. The turf goes over as if it loved to be turned, and the plow tucks it down as a mother tucks a coverlet round her child. Now it is very easy. Yes, it *is* very easy; but it had to *learn* to be easy!

So it is with spiritual plowing. Some men, looking upon others, and seeing with what ease they perform their Christian duties, say, "There must have been more grace given to them than there has been given to me; for what it is almost impossible for me to do, they seem to do without the least trouble." The reason is, that their higher nature has had more culture than yours has had. If you will take the rocks out of your rocky field, and the stumps out of your stumpy field, in five or ten years you shall have just as good plowing as they have. But you have got to *earn* it.

How many men there are who would like to be able to get their graces just as they can get an old, well-cultivated farm. They can buy a farm after it has been brought to the highest state of perfection; but, though you can do that in natural husbandry, you can not do it in spiritual husbandry. Every man has to take his own spiritual farm, and bring it, step by step, into a state of perfection, if he would have it in that state.

9. I may, perhaps, without seeming fanciful, use this allegory to describe the various kinds of spiritual husbandmen and husbandry.

First, there are *shiftless* and *lazy* farmers in the natural world, and among real husbandmen. They have no ambition, and very little industry. They raise just enough grain to keep them through the year—just enough to live on, and to make laziness fat. That is all they ask, and therefore they have no ambition to seek for more. They have no better farms at the end of ten years than they had in the beginning. They manage to get enough off from them to keep soul and body together, and that is all.

And how many men there are who, after having been in the Church ten or twenty years, are just about where they were when they first entered it! They are a little better in this or that field—a little improved in spots—but the annual harvest is not much more at the end of twenty years than it was at the end of five years. Lazy Christians! shiftless Christians! ungrowing and unfruitful Christians!

Next, there are the *scheming*, *changeable* farmers. There are men who, every year, instead of laying out their strength upon well-ascertained processes, and for definite and practical realities, are bewitched with new schemes and experiments. They are forever trying new things, without completing old ones. They are continually running from one thing to another; and the rick shows the result of such farming. The barn and granary are lean. Only the man's head is rich—rich in new schemes!

And there are just such spiritual farmers. One is running after new promises, another after a new faith, and another after new solutions of miracles. One man has got a new doctrine, another man has got some new idea of ecclesiasticism and Church organization, and another man has got some new way of putting this or that religious truth. There is nothing so exciting to them as these perpetual newnesses. They see their old farms left untilled, with more burdocks, and thistles, and weeds growing on every acre of them than any wain, thrice loaded, could carry off! Their time and attention are absorbed by religious schemes and speculations. Poor, miserable, thriftless spiritual husbandry is this!

Then there are the *pedigree* farmers, not unknown among men in natural husbandry. They have got the very poorest fruit to be found in the whole neighborhood, bearing the highest-sounding names. They have got the most marvelous pears, the most wonderful apples, the most extraordinary strawberries. They give the most astonishing names to the most meagre, miserable fruit. But then it has such high-sounding titles! These are the same men whose herds are the poorest, the scrawniest, and the weakest in the whole country round; but they have a pedigree that takes them back, every one of them, to Noah's ark! Their oxen are lean, their cows are milkless, but they are proud of them nevertheless—they have such a noble pedigree! They are uncurried, unfatted, and unfatable, to be sure; but ah! what a line of blood did they spring from!

Did you never see just such husbandmen in the Church?—men who had no greater morality, or piety, or spiritual experience, but who went back through a long pedigree, one going even up to Peter, and another up to Paul, and others up to the prophets themselves! These were *pedigree* farmers!

Then, next, there are what may be called *chaff* farmers in spiritual husbandry. I do not know that there are any such in natural husbandry; but you can conceive what they would be there. Suppose you should find a farmer who said that he had been pondering upon the theory and science of farming; that he was satisfied that farmers had been doing injustice to many kinds of seeds; and that he felt assured that if a man would sow cockle-seeds, and do it sincerely, God would give the increase? So he would—of cockles!

Here is a man who is sowing what appears to be black ashes. A friend accosts him, saying, "What have you got in your bag?" He learns that it is the hulls of buckwheat—the chaff of old wheat; and he says, "What are you sowing chaff for?" "Why," the man replies, "I have the impression that if a man is only faithful and sincere, it makes no difference what he sows!" Does it not make a difference? Suppose a

man should sow couch-grass, thinking that he was going to get timothy hay? Would he? Suppose a man should set out crab-apple-trees in his orchard, and think that he was going to get fall pippins? Would he? Suppose a man should sow that most detestable of all detestable seeds, the Canada thistle, and say that it was wheat? Would any amount of botanical sincerity on the part of this fool secure to him a harvest of any thing better than the seed sown? If he sowed chaff, he would not even reap chaff. If he sowed weeds, he would reap weeds. For what a man sows, in natural husbandry, that shall he reap.

Now a great many persons say, "Why do you teach us such and such doctrines of the Godhead? Why do you teach us that we should believe in the everlasting Father, in the atoning Son, and in the Holy Ghost? Why must we go in this new and living way? What matter is it whether we believe in the Bible or not, so that we live about right? or so that we are sincere, and do about as well as we know how? Is not that enough?" No, it is not enough. There is the same connection between spiritual seed and the result that there is between natural seed and the result. Sincerity is a very good thing, but it can not make grain out of chaff; neither can it make Christian graces out of worldly affections and worldly estates. There are certain truths that must be held, in substance, at least. There are certain spiritual truths that stand so connected with a spiritual cause as to be indispensable to certain spiritual results; and that man who thinks that it makes no difference what he believes, so long as he is sincere, is a *chaff* farmer.

Next are what may be called *fence* farmers. What would you think of a husbandman who was not particularly careful of his mowing lot, or of his grain crops, or of his root crops, or of his orchard, or of his garden, but left them all in a sadly neglected state, because he was giving his whole time to the building of his fences? One large part of his time is employed in setting up his surveyor's instruments, and taking measure-

ments, perhaps for the five hundredth time, of the boundaries of his farm. He gets up in the morning, and says, "I must farm," and takes his compass, or theodolite, or whatever instrument he uses, and goes and measures off the line between himself and one neighbor. After he has made a very careful measurement, he says, "Exactly here is the line, and not one ten thousandth part of an inch shall you come on to my land." When he has run the line between himself and that neighbor, he runs the line between himself and the neighbor on another side. So he goes round and round his whole farm, marking out just where all the lines are. Then he begins to lay his fences. And oh! such fences! He must have the best fences that can be built. He never can get them high enough. He never can be done building fences. Oftentimes, when he has got them all built up, he goes to work and pulls them down again. And what for? Why, just so that he can build them up again! He goes on building them up and pulling them down, and calls that farming!

Do you not see the application? Did you never hear of spiritual husbandmen that were forever defining the great points of doctrine; forever discriminating just the line between Calvinism and Arminianism, or between High Calvinism and Low Calvinism; forever drawing the distinction between High-Church and Low-Church of every sort; forever running round and round boundaries of the kingdom of God, making this place right here, and fixing that crook there; building and rebuilding the middle walls of partition between one sect and another, but never sowing and never reaping? Their farms are untilled and unfruitful. Their fences are all good, however. There is very little tilth any where on their land; but ah! they know just where their lines run, and exactly where they stop. Do you never find men of this kind in our day, who are forever building fences, and, like the men who built the Tower of Babel, trying to build them so high that they will touch the very heaven? There never was a fence that would keep moles and vermin

out of a man's farm; and there never was a fence that would keep hawks off from it. Birds will fly over any fence you can build. The best thing a farmer can do is to take such care of his soil as to have a harvest so rich that he will be able to spare a little to vermin and birds. No church ever had a confession of faith or system of doctrine that would insure it against small encroachments and annoyances. The only safe way is to have so much spiritual culture in the Church that such minor troubles make little difference with its prosperity.

But there is one other class of farmers. They may be called *Nimrod* farmers—hunting farmers. For you can imagine a husbandman who would neglect to care for his soil, and go out after squirrels, and all manner of vermin that were eating his grain—if he had any that they could eat; who would go out to shoot weasels in the wall, foxes in the field, wolves in the wood, and bears every where; and who, when he could find nothing to shoot, would lie out at night, watching for raccoons, and range up and down through the day, searching for some stray dog, where there *should be* sheep, but where there are none.

There are in the Church what may be called heresy-hunters. They always carry a rifle—a spiritual rifle—under their arm. You will find them forever outlying, watching for heresy—not so much in their own hearts, not so much in their own Church, not so much in their own minister, but in other people's hearts, in other people's churches, in other people's ministers. If any man happens to hold an opinion respecting any doctrine which does not accord with their own peculiar views, they all spread abroad to run him down. They are taking care of, and defending, the faith! They are searching for foxes, and wolves, and bears, that they suppose are laying waste God's husbandry! They never do any thing except fire at other folks. I have no doubt that Nimrod was a very good fellow, in his own poor, miserable way; but a Nimrod minister is the meanest of all sorts of hunters!

But let us pass on to notice how thoroughly the Bible appropriates every process of husbandry, and applies it to spiritual growth, and to derive from that revelation the lesson of how we may, by our imagination, look upon almost every thing that takes place in life, in such a way that it shall be significant of some sort of spiritual state or change. All through the Bible you will find that "plowing" and "harrowing" are employed in relation to spiritual things. "Sowing" and "tilling" are both of them terms appropriated to spiritual instruction. The "sickle" and "reaping"—these are familiar to you in their spiritual acceptation. "Thrashing," and "grain," and "chaff"—these are used continually in the Scriptures. "Gathering," and "garnering," and "grinding"—these are set to signify spiritual truths. Burning up chaff, or letting the wind blow it away, that it may be utterly scattered and gone forever—how powerfully are these things set forth, especially in the prophets!

Take another department—that of the orchard or vineyard. Mark the difference between the wild and the cultivated vine, and the wilding and the grafted plant, that is recognized in the Bible. The process of transplanting, by which a branch is taken from its parent stem and grafted upon another; by which the old trunk and root are made to bear a new top; by which the natural man is made to bear gracious fruit—how is that set forth in the Word of God? The process of pruning, by which a certain wild luxuriance of wood is held back, in order that a greater degree of fruitfulness may be induced—how is that set forth in the Bible? Blossoming, in things in which men have blossoms, and fruit-bearing, in things in which men bear fruit—how are these taken up and appropriated to spiritual uses in the Scriptures? I can not go through the whole of these examples, they are so numerous.

Lastly, I wish to speak of this subject in its larger application. The whole world, in the Bible, is spoken of as being God's husbandry. Oh, what a breadth of tillage! Nations and races, in all their generations, spread abroad through six

thousand years, and flowing on endlessly, so that no prophet's eye can discern the end to come; all the broad earth, with its multiplied populations—these are God's husbandry. God is the Great Cultivator. He looks out over his vast estate—the world—as a man looks over his smaller estate. All the agencies of nature are for God. For him the nations are simple instruments of culture. Revolutions, famines, disasters, prosperities—all things that check or push forward the growth of men, are so many implements in his hand by which he tills this great farm of the earth!

The end of the world is the harvest. Sinners are the chaff and the weeds. The righteous are the good seed and the fruit—the one to be swept away, and the other to be garnered up. At last there shall come the winter, when all things shall cease and rest; and the glory of summer shall be in heaven, where all which is vital, and which carries its life, like a seed, in itself, shall be gathered. When this has taken place, and the withered leaves, and the decaying stalk, and all things else which have come to nothing, have fallen to the ground and perished, then shall be the end!

Christian brethren, let us take solemn heed to these significant teachings of God's Word. We are a part of his husbandry. "Ye are God's husbandry." For you he thinks. For you he tills. He is breaking in your disposition. He is preparing the soil of your hearts. He is cultivating you now by ways that make you cry out with pain—for all plowing and harrowing is painful. The seed long sown may not have yet shown its nature. No affliction for the present is joyous, but rather grievous; but afterward it bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. "Ye are God's husbandry." Rejoice in it. Let your bosom lie open to his influence as the soil lies open to the sun. Let God do as seemeth him good; and by-and-by, with all your faculties, with every feeling of your nature, you shall, in the great harvest, bless God!

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XII.

The Ministration of Suffering.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, March 22d, 1863.

The Ministration of Suffering.

"And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—Rev., vii., 14.

In this scene, where figure is carried up to symbol, and the whole exalted to the utmost reach of imagination, we behold the glory of a throng of radiant beings whose apparel dazzles the sight, and whose triumph overflows the soul. They live in the very centre of joy. No care is upon them. No burdens of ill-borne labor weigh them down. They are tied by no bands to uncongenial duties. They are freer than the birds. Their songs are more exhilarant than summer winds. Surely these are the favorite children of heaven, born of purity into purity, without experience of evil, pressed forward in this sacred vision to show how glorious they are who have kept their first estate of heavenly holiness. As such the revelator gazed upon them; and as the songs of lofty triumph ceased for a moment, the guiding angel questioned him, "What are these that are arrayed in white robes? Whence came they?" We may imagine the rapt apostle, startled by the intimation of this question, as if he *should* have known them, and gazing on them fixedly and long. But not one did he recognize. No earthly care was written on the flaming brow of any. No dull wrinkles showed the channels through which griefs had flowed. Surely he had never seen them! There was no earthly man that could find out any one of these.

Then spake the angel: "These are they which came out

of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The raiment signifies the whole state and character. Here it is symbolic. The blood signifies the suffering of mortal human life. And the whole declaration is, that this glorious fellowship of noble singers, the radiant brotherhood of triumphing saints, were exalted to their heavenly glory and perfectness through the natural and earthly steps of sanctified suffering. This scene is but a picture under which you might write the words of the Master: "In this world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

A great lesson to be derived from this vision is the true moral result of sanctified suffering. There is another less considered, but perhaps equally important truth—the great fellowship to which suffering brings men; the final unity of sufferers in a sphere of celestial glory.

The contrast between suffering on earth and its fruits in heaven are wonderful, and ought to be kept constantly together, so that the darkness of the one shall be interpreted by the light of the other; that we shall not feel that sorrows have ended their course when aching ceases; that we shall not for a moment be left to believe that all the fruit of suffering is that which we pluck hitherward. We should know that sufferings produce their final results only after we are disembodied, and stand on the heavenly plane in the glorious fellowship of the redeemed. Then it will be made known to us that these, and all of them, came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb by the maintenance of their faith; by their endeavors to live according to God's commandments; by undergoing pain, and self-denial, and hardness as good soldiers; by accepting providential afflictions; by cleansing their dispositions and purifying their hearts; by suffering death itself. The marvelous economy of earthly suffering, rightly understood, is an economy of cleansing and of beautifying.

It is a lustration, and is preliminary to a state of glorification.

Let us, in some few points, contrast suffering on earth with its fruits in heaven.

1. Earthly suffering *seems* to come either as a vengeance or as a calamity upon men. It is still a surprise until we have been long wonted to it. But the heavenly side, as disclosed in the apocalyptic vision, shows that suffering ordinarily comes neither as a vengeance nor as a calamity; for, although we may understand that God sometimes employs suffering for purposes of punishment, yet such an employment of it is special. Suffering is intercalated upon the course of nature, and is part of a universal experience. Storms may be most destroying, overflowing the land, tearing up foundations, sweeping away bridges, and submerging harvests; but this result of storms is exceptional. The fall of rain and the sweep of winds are a part of the economy of mercy. It is not for destruction, but for benefit. And so sufferings may, at times, in the hands of God, be punitive, but ordinarily they are not. They are a part of God's design for the education of men in this world. They are pangs of birth into higher states. Suffering is intended to make us let go of things that are lower, and to rise a grade higher. The earthly seeming and the heavenly reality, if you could contrast them, are in wonderful opposition. Here it seems as if God were angry; but in heaven it is seen that he was dealing in mercy. Here it seems as if great disaster had overwhelmed us; but there the breaking of the cloud over us appears as the waters of a bath from which we shall emerge purer, cleaner, and more manly.

2. Suffering seems to some contrary to the course of nature; an interruption and violation of natural order; but the revelation of the effects of suffering upon the future state shows that it is in accordance with the course of nature. It would seem rational to suppose that God built the enginery of the human mind for happiness; that the way of growth

ought not to be through bafflings; that men should not find their stability by overthrow, and their liberty by restraint. At first view every thing apparently tends toward freedom and full development. Men fail to see, however, that while there is one tendency toward liberty, there is another toward restraint.

Imagine a tree expostulating with an orchardist, and saying, "Why is this oft-coming of the knife? Is it not the nature of a tree to grow? I am shooting out branches on every side, and upward, according to the law of nature; and wherefore am I thus pruned continually?" Symmetry is in the mind of the man that trains the tree, and it must grow for that very sake, and must be cut back for that very sake, though symmetry is not in the thought of the tree. And to symmetry is added something higher yet — fruit — though that is not in the thought of the tree, but only of the orchardist. He nurtures his trees for these ends, but blind nature knows nothing about them.

If you consider only this life, it would seem as if suffering ought not to have been a part of the course of nature; it would seem as if, God having ordained the body with all its functions and faculties, the natural process of growth would be an easy and progressive evolution by such arrangements as should be devoid of suffering. But actual human experience shows exactly the reverse. If any thing can be shown by the indications and facts of nature, it is that man never grows to a full man's estate without the ministration of suffering; and that suffering is a part of nature, or it could not be universal.

3. The contrast between the earthly appearance of suffering as something that weakens and beats us down, and the glorious light of the heavenly side, is very striking; for while on earth suffering seems, in all its immediate tendencies, to take away from man, it is, in point of fact, adding to him. It seems to beat him down; but when we look forward to the full disclosure, we find that it is building him up. It

would seem that to put a garment in blood would be to make it any thing but white, but the saints have made theirs white in the blood of the Lamb. So on earth it seems as though strength would be gained in any way rather than by the flail, but it is disclosed that it is by threshing that men gain strength.

What can differ more than the aspect of the oncoming and the whole phenomenon of a summer's rain, and its actual after results? The sun goes out. Birds cease their singing. Low and terrific sounds and voices, vengeful thunders, are in the air. Great winds come as *avant couriers*, sweeping onward, and causing the trees to groan and writhe as if in pain. Weakly leaves are shredded off and hurled hither and thither. All beasts hide themselves. Every thing looks dark as the judgment day. Then comes, with mighty roar, the outpouring and beating rain, that still farther shreds off the leaves, and tears the trees, and beats down the grass, and overwhelms the grain, and dishevels the flowers. In the midst of this storm let a man look out, and he will skeptically say, "Is this the refreshment of nature? Is this the cup that is put to the lips of flowers that they may drink and be revived?" And yet, let the hour go by; let all its gloomy works and seemings be swept away with it; let the sun reappear; let the birds begin to sing again; let the trees shake themselves of drops of rain; let the grass lift itself up once more, and then man will instinctively praise God for that which before seemed to be only a process of destruction. The storm seems to have gone; but it has not gone. Those things which at first appeared—all the external signs of fury—these have passed away; and now the storm is at work on the root; and every blade of grass is drawing, and every tree is pumping, and every flower is drinking. Who could have cleansed the air as that breathing wind has? Who could have swept the vapors out of the heavens as that tornado has? Who, by any appliance of human skill, could have watered the acres as that rain has? Who could have given

new life to the wasting herbage as that thunder-storm has, which went tramping through the valley and the wilderness apparently a messenger of evil? One hour after it is gone all things silently thank God that, one hour before, shuddered, and trembled, and said, "Hast thou forgotten to be gracious?"

So it is with the ministrations of suffering and sorrow. While the storm pelts, men shrink. While the thunder sounds, they slink down. While the tempest rages, it is as if they were ruined. But when the violence abates a little, they begin to lift up their head, and to perceive that it was not all dark, that it was not all thunder, that it was not all beating, that there was an element of good in it; and gradually they learn the sweet bounty and benefit that God meant to bestow upon them by afflictions.

4. The seeming cruelty of much of suffering, and the unnaturalness of it, are contrasted with great relief with this vision of the final state of those who have suffered in this world. The fatherliness and benevolence of suffering does not appear in its mere earthly relations. In heaven it is clearly pictured. There we see what it has wrought out. It would seem, often, as if joys blossomed only to be plucked; as if affections were developed only to be denied that which they crave; as if heart-hunger grew for the very sake of famine; as if God put concentrated life into tender hearts only to tear and lacerate them.

If you separate human experience into sections, and look at it, there is something terrible in the flight of suffering. I gather together in my imagination all that, since the days of Rachel, have mourned and refused to be comforted because their children were not. If the death of children had happened only in my life and yours—if it was a woe that belonged merely to a special state of civilization, it would not be so appalling; but from the beginning of the world down through all the thousands of years it has been computed that more than one half of the human family have been born to die in

infancy. It is not so very much if you simply think of children's dying; but every child that dies carries anguish to at least two hearts. And when I gather together all the myriad men and women that have lived to be childless throughout all the continents of the earth, and set them in long perspective, and think that God ordained the race, and fitted the heart exquisitely to love, and to suffer in the bereavements of love, and that the grand processional experience of time has been devastation, *devastation*, DEVASTATION, so that the human family has been cut in two, and one half has been given apparently to be snatched away that the other half might mourn with grief that could not be comforted, I can not but marvel at the dispensations of Providence.

When the Venetians besieged Athens, they threw their miscreant shot into the Acropolis, with all its treasures of art, and these messengers of destruction beat down those noble marbles of Phidias, casting them from the places where they had stood peerless in glory for hundreds of years, breaking and scattering them. Afflictions seem to me to be thrown into families where apparently their effect is like a bomb when it strikes in the midst of exquisite statues—blind, heedless, devastating.

If there were no revelation, there would be but one way of philosophizing on this subject; that would be to roll up life's scroll, and seal it, and throw it into oblivion. When I look at the history of human suffering in all its phases, from the dawn of creation to the present time, I am almost overwhelmed by the contemplation. The whole earth has groaned and travailed in pain until now. Human life has been a grand march of suffering. The race is a vast army; they have tramped to their own music—a music of sighs, and sobs, and sorrows; the whole creation has been swinging round in its wild and darkling circuits until now. Heaven has heard its sad symphonies from first to last. Without a revelation it is horrible and harrowing; and they that think the most about it come the nearest to going crazy.

(But ah! when you look up, and find that suffering is only the evolution of a natural state of growing, and that it has distinctly a work to accomplish, the whole aspect of the subject is changed.) As the outside coverings or leaves of a bud administer to the growth of that bud for a certain time, and then drop off, so suffering administers to the growth of the mind a certain time, and then ceases its action as an instrument of pain. It has a God-designed function to perform; one which, though it is unpleasant in the beginning, is glorious in its results; one which, although it is hard to be borne, is munificent in its final remuneration. God whispers of these things, if we could only hear him: "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." We did not need to be told that; but we did need to be told that Christian complacency in divine Providence does not require that we should not suffer. Some seem to think that a man, to be a Christian, ought to be able not to suffer when suffering comes; but the ache of suffering is a part of its medicine. You might as well say that manliness requires that a man should drink bitter draughts, and not taste them, and call them sweet, as to say that Christianity requires that a man should bear suffering, and say that it is not suffering. It requires no such thing. It does not even require that we should illumine suffering so that for the present it shall seem joyous. The Christian, when his companion is taken from him, is not required to say, "I am so wonderfully strengthened that I have no suffering." A mother is not called upon, when she has given up her child to God, to say, "I suffer none." You have a right to suffer. And God has been pleased to say that, though no afflictions for the present are joyous, but grievous, nevertheless *afterward* they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.

Human nature is very much like some elements of vegetation. In tapioca, one of the most harmless of all articles of food, there is one of the most deadly of all poisons. But the

poison is of such a volatile nature that when it is subjected to heat it escapes, and leaves only the nutriment of the starch. I think that the heart of man originally is full of poison, but that, when it is tried by affliction, little by little the poison, the rancor, the virus exhales, and leaves all the rest wholesome indeed.

5. Earthly suffering seems to weaken men, to discourage them, and to destroy them; but the fact is that it does not really destroy or weaken them. That part in us which suffering weakens is usually that very part which ought to be weakened.

The great trouble in turning flax into thread or cloth is caused by that which gives the green plant its very power; for when the flax is growing it needs two things: one is its ligneous or woody structure, and the other is its gluten. But when it has grown enough, and man wants it to make garments, to furnish the queen in the palace and the peasant in the cottage, he must get rid of these two things. And how is the flax separated from them? It is plucked and thrown into the field, that, under the influence of repeated rains and dews, the wood may rot; then the flax is taken and put through the brakes until every particle of the stiffness and strength that it had is destroyed, and all but the stringy fibres can be shaken to the winds; then it is subjected to certain chemical processes by which the gluten is taken away; and not till then is it in a proper condition to be carried to the spinning-wheel and the loom, and manufactured into materials for use.

So is it with men. There are a great many qualities which they need up to a certain point, but which beyond that are a disadvantage to them. We need a given amount of self-will and independence; but after these qualities have been carried to a certain point, the necessity for them measurably ceases, and there must be superinduced on them opposite qualities. For man is made up of contraries. He is to be as firm as iron, and as yielding as silk; he is to be perse-

vering, and yet most ready to give up; he is to be as steadfast as a mountain, and yet easy to be entreated; he is to abhor evil, and yet to love with an ineffable love; he is to be courageous, and yet to have that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Certain qualities, when they have served their purpose, must give place to opposite qualities. Afflictions, under the supervision of divine Providence, are working out in those that are exercised thereby beneficent results; so that suffering, while it seems frequently to be wasting and destroying men, is only wasting and destroying that part of them which they are better without than with.

An inexperienced young miser, we will suppose, inherits the Almaden mine. Great heaps of ore are thrown out, and he goes and looks at it, and says, "I am a mountain rich." He gives directions to have this ore prepared for market. The laborers take it and throw it into the furnace; and he watches the process with greedy eye, saying, "What! putting my precious silver in the fire?" As it begins to melt, and flow out, and grow less and less, he is appalled to see how it is wasting away. But the men that smelt it laugh, and say, "You have lost nothing; you have gained by as much as it has shrunk; for it was nothing but ore, and nine tenths of it was good for nothing, and that which was good was so tied up that it could not serve you at all. It was necessary that you should lose nine tenths of it in order that you might have the benefit of the other tenth."

In this life, that which seems to men to be wasted and destroyed is frequently that which they can better afford to lose than to keep.

6. Suffering on earth seems to set men apart from their fellows. Sometimes it puts them into obscurity. It often throws them into banishment. It is an experience full of solitude, voluntary and yet inevitable. Every heart knows its own bitterness. There is a delicacy in grief, often. And though sometimes it is clamorous and vocal, oftener it is silent. But there is a process quietly going on, though it

may not be apparent, by which those who seem to be separated in the present shall in the future be gathered together by sorrow. Those that weep apart on earth shall joy together in heaven. Those who in their sorrows are cast out from the sympathies of their fellow-men shall be gathered into the fellowship and sympathy of the heavenly host. This separation and disintegration are only apparent. Really, it is a preparation for fellowship in the world to come.

And it is close upon many of you. Your salvation is nearer than when you believed. You are not far from that host that waits for you. I believe that there is a ministration of spirits. I believe that there is a heavenly multitude that take cognizance of our going out and coming in. I do not pretend that we have any thing like scientific evidence on this point; but I hold to the general truth that there is a connection between the spirits that are in heaven, whom God employs in ministrations of mercy, and men on earth; and I believe that God knows, as they know, that there are weary-eyed watchers and sufferers here below who are not a hand's-breadth from their translation. It can not be long before your sorrows shall end and your eternal joy shall begin. Then be patient. Is the storm fierce? Does the rain beat down heavily? It is almost past. The time of the singing of birds is at hand. There is a great deal to be borne in suffering, but there is a great deal that is worth suffering for; and if, when called to go through affliction, you could only feel, "This is God's bath by which I am being cleansed," it would be shorn of all that which makes us shrink from it.

"Ah!" many of you will say, "there is the very trouble. If my heart were really softened; if I felt that God's hinderances, and disappointments, and thwartings, and bereavements of affection were softening me, and making me better, I should have some comfort; but they seem to be hardening me."

Sometimes there are illusory effects of trouble. There is an element of exhaustion, and there is a reactionary element,

by which those in suffering are wrongly judged. Frequently, when persons seem to have grown harder, they are not harder. They have merely lost the power of much feeling. A person is not necessarily hard because he does not feel. His want of feeling is often nothing but nature insisting upon suffering no more till it has had an opportunity to recuperate itself. I have known persons who, after great trouble, could not read the Bible, and did not wish to pray, or go to an assembly of God's people. Singing was discord in their ear. And so it was with them sometimes for weeks and months. But it was simply nature attempting to restore their wasted energies. There was no moral character in it.

But where there is, besides this, a rebellious disposition; where one is conscious that over and above this the heart is becoming sour, morose, and evil, there is reason for alarm and watchfulness. For next to the magnitude of the benefit of suffering well borne is the magnitude of the mischief of suffering ill borne. On the one hand, it sweetens, and lifts up, and glorifies; on the other hand, it darkens, and destroys, and whelms in night forever. We are to take care. It is our business to see to it that suffering does us good.

But let us not suppose that we can always tell how much good suffering does. Persons sometimes say, "I am not conscious of receiving much benefit from suffering. I submit to it; I endeavor to accept it as an administration of divine wisdom, and I give myself up to be done with as it may seem good in God's sight; but I do not see that much good is wrought in my case; and why should I suffer?" That is for the future to tell you. God does not tell you. "What I do know," he says, "ye know not." It is not possible that there should be a disclosure in this life, except in faint rays, of what the full and final result of suffering is to be.

I should like to have any man attempt to interpret to a worm what it is going to be when it is a butterfly. Where is there a foreshadowing analogy, or any thing, to indicate to it what it is coming to in its fuller form? And how can any

one disclose what is to be evolved when God's work is completed in this life? For, although we may know something, our knowledge is fragmentary and limited. And it is a glorious consolation to believe that sufferings forgotten are not less causes of good than those that are remembered, and that sufferings which apparently leave but little trace are working out in us great and blessed results in the kingdom to which we are hastening.

Sufferings which tame the rankness and vehemence of our natural faculties, which subdue the arrogance of our nature, should teach us sympathy with men, and make us kind. Visible sufferings appeal to our natural generosity; but we seldom learn how to sympathize with the invisible sufferings of the soul until we have been inwardly tried. Nothing joins men together like common suffering. In this life, even, we have a foretaste of that fellowship of the future of which I have been speaking.

Sufferings breed gentleness. They take away asperity. They reduce the mind to a finer edge. They bring men through a sense of their own infirmities to more charity for their fellow-men, by enabling them to read again in others' experience their own sorrows. Many men are harsh, exacting, and cruel until they are made sufferers, who then become sweeter-minded, and more tender and gracious. You can see that men are made pure by suffering.

It is a source of self-knowledge. It teaches us our helplessness in our best estate. Oh, how strong is the natural man, and how weak is the experienced man! How strong hope makes us, and how feeble experience makes us! Without experience, how men feel that they can build against chance! how they mean to be wise, and strong, and rich! how they mark out their ways of life, meaning not to make the mistakes of other men! It makes me think of a mouse in a field, that says, "I will dig so deep that nothing shall find me. I will build my house behind this tuft of grass, and nobody shall ever suspect that here is a mouse's house." And al-

ready, at the other end of the field, the ox-team and the plow are moving, and soon they sweep past, burying the little house, mouse and all, so deep that he never knows what has happened to him. But such talk from a mouse in a field is wisdom itself compared to the declaration of a man who says, "I mean to make no mistakes; I will be rich, and strong, and wise, and high; and calamities shall not touch me." When such men have built the foundations of their life, confident that they shall escape trouble, in a moment the law of social liability takes hold of them, and they are overborne and destroyed. Not for want of wisdom, not by reason of unwise planning on their part, but because they are connected with other men who do not plan wisely. It is not necessary that you should build your foundations poorly to have your house come down. You may build them well, and your neighbor may build his so that yours shall sag in spite of you. Under such circumstances, it is not your carelessness, but his, that brings your house down. Every man is liable to disasters that are beyond his control.

Besides, all men are fools—especially those who think that they are not. There is no man that can say, for an hour or a moment, "I am so wise that I have no need to fear." Self-confidence is well for a little way. It sustains men under discouragement, and holds them up when without it they would sink down. But, after all, the man who builds against time, and chance, and thick-falling drops of suffering; the man who thinks that he can successfully oppose himself to the Almighty, that shakes down palaces, and makes mountains burn at his presence, is simply a fool; for he is liable, at any instant, to have his property, and all that belongs to him in this life, swept from him.

Or, his property may stand, and it may be only his heart that is shot away. For there is many and many a man who builds his house as the old Egyptians built their pyramids. Nothing should shake them—no, nothing. But what was in the middle of them? Coffins, and the dust of royalty. And

there is many a man whose house contains only coffins and the dust of departed loved ones. Where is that wife? Where are those children? Where is that brother or that sister? Where is that friend? The man's heart has been desolated; and he says, "If God had taken every thing else, and left them, I would not have called it affliction." That is it; he did not ask you what you would rather part with. You had been going on, and building up, forgetting that there was a point where your career came within the bounds of the divine government; and when the finger of God was laid upon that which was precious to you, you thought that the day of judgment had come, such was the pain and anguish which you experienced.

Now every man is open before him with whom we have to do. No man can guard himself against suffering in a world that is sin-smitten, and shrouded with troubles; in a world where God educates men by trials and afflictions; in a world where there is an endless funeral march, and where sorrow beats the drum to which all men in the procession keep step. In such a world men must suffer, and suffer to the end.

But oh, the cleansing of suffering! God grant that we may have the cleansing, and not the baptism alone. God grant that there may be such a cleansing that by-and-by, in some future world, another revelator shall stand and see you and yours shouting in the throng of ineffable glory, and, being asked "Who are these, and whence came they?" shall say of them and you, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Though, when you look upon that rejoicing throng, you see no face that you ever knew, that is your father. On earth he was an old man, bowed down and wrinkled with many and many a disaster. You remember how he appeared then. Now look into that sainted face, and you shall find no wrinkle. Every sign of the remembered weakness is gone, and gone forever.

That is a child of affliction, whose woes on earth were a marvel. She seemed to have been set apart for suffering, as a rock on an ocean coast seems to be a mark toward which the waves are aimed. But look now at the fair celestial beauty of her countenance. Hear her sweet flowing song. There is not one note nor indication of all that she suffered here below. That is past.

Listen to the words of the Lord in the closing verses of this chapter:

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more—"

Then those yearnings and longings that will not rest by day or sleep by night—longings and yearnings compared with which the body's hunger and thirst are as nothing—these shall cease.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

That is spoken for the poor slave. Tell it to him, ye that go where he is. Tell him that there is a word of remembrance for him too.

"For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters"—that is, unto fountains of life—"and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Now suffer on. Be patient. Ask God to bless your trouble. Be more anxious for manhood than for happiness. When in trouble, be more anxious that God should bless that trouble than that he should take it away; and seek that it may prepare you, not so much for pleasanter places in this life, as for those higher seats and the saintly ceremonies and joys of paradise.

XIII.

The Necessity of Correct Belief.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, October 6th, 1861.

The Necessity of Correct Belief.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 Tim., iii., 14–17.

No rebuke could be more pointed than that which this passage affords for those who neglect the Scripture, for those who deal with it frivolously, or for those who abuse it, making it a mere magazine of texts wherewith to carry on theological war. It is a book given for the promotion of godliness of life. It is admirably adapted to that end, and to make men happy hereafter, as well as good here. And the apostle blames, by implication, on the one side, those that neglect its truths wholly, and, on the other side, those that overzealously employ its truths for the promotion of something else than godliness. It "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that" —this is the final end—"that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The apostle here shows that truth is important as means to an end, and that this end is godliness of life. Truth is therefore an instrument for the production of human character.

Comprehensively, then, we may say that there are two things to be noticed in this passage: first, that the proper use and end of all religious knowledge is the promotion of good conduct and character; and, secondly, that there is a

definite and important relation between certain truths and certain moral results. The same fruits will not follow as well from one set of principles as from another. Right belief has much to do with right conduct.

Believing is the basis of all instruction and education. Every parent, every teacher, every moralist, as well as every preacher of righteousness, holds that human life and conduct will largely depend upon the things that men are taught to believe. There has sprung up a popular notion that it makes no difference what a man believes concerning religion if only he be sincere. It is said that one faith, whether it be Catholic or Protestant, Mohammedan or Christian, is as good as another, so that it be sincerely held. Mere conventional morality, without any real religious feeling or faith of any kind, is esteemed as good as spiritual or experimental religion. A prayerless, godless, worldly man, of an amiable turn of mind, who conforms to the maxims of common morality existing in the community about him, is wont to say, "I have no great deal of religion, and I do not trouble myself much about religious doctrines; but I believe in doing right, and, after all, it makes but little difference, if a man is only sincere, what he does believe."

There is just enough truth in this phrase, in some of its applications, to make it plausible, and to give it currency. And so it has come to be a proverb.

Now proverbs are the colporteurs of philosophy. They do by popular truth what colporteurs do by theology—they go from man to man, from house to house, carrying it to all people. They are formulas of easy use. They preach a great deal more than sermons. They are neither so long nor so heavy, and they are remembered much longer and much more easily. They nestle in the mind, and nimbly come to our exigencies. When we have an experience, out comes a proverb to explain or direct it. Proverbs are ready at the nick of time for all purposes of good or evil.

If a proverb is true, it is of incalculable service. It lives

through generations. It needs no settlement, no stipend, no pulpit. It goes every where, preaching to every body for nothing. But if a proverb is bad, it is equally dangerous, just as enduring, and no less ubiquitous. Thus a selfish thing, shrewdly expressed, will cultivate selfishness for centuries. A bit of sinister wisdom, wittily phrased, will inoculate a whole nation with a malignant influence.

These proverbs—you can not hunt them easily. They fire and run. They are every where, and they are nowhere. You turn out your great argument to hunt a proverb, and the proverb is gone before you can bring your argument to bear upon it. It is like a park of artillery employed upon musquitoes.

Nevertheless, if they are evil, their mischievousness requires that they should not be let alone. And so, now and then, a proverb which touches vital and distinctive truth should be taken up, and, like a venomous insect, be pinned to the wall.

When it is said, "It matters little what a man's creed is if his life be right," if is meant, "It matters little what a man's head-knowledge is, so that he is sound in his heart," and by sincerity is intended, not sincerity in belief, but sincerity in life or godliness, a great truth is expressed—a truth that is not enough recognized. In education, it is of great importance what sort of truth you employ, for some kinds of teaching are a great deal more likely to produce godliness than others. But, whatever the teaching has been, if the man is a good man, however strange it may appear that such a creed should have such a disciple, however far he may be from the average results which ordinarily follow the teaching of such things as he believes, his godliness is to be acknowledged in spite of the beliefs. If a man lives like a Christian, you are to admit that he is one, without regard to the Church or creed to which he belongs. In other words, the *result* being gained, of goodness and godliness, for which ends truth is given, and churches are established that is to be conclusive.

And no man has a right to reject a true Christian man on account of his belief or his disbelief. When, out of a heretical sect, or out of a sect from which proceeds many evils and mischiefs, there come men of true Christian lives and dispositions, they must be accepted as Christians. I do not say that the principles held by that sect are innocuous, and that it is a matter of indifference whether you do or do not preach them. It makes a great deal of difference what you preach. These men, being true Christians, are not exponents of the principles under which they have been educated. They are exceptions to the ordinary results of the teaching of those principles. Other influences have been at work in their development. They do not fairly represent the tendency of the instructions to which they have been accustomed.

There are thousands that are not half as good as they ought to be, considering the things that they believe. A man's creed does not necessarily make him good. And there are thousands that are better than their creeds. And if a man is bad, you are to reject him, no matter how good his beliefs may be. If he be proved a good man, he is to be accepted joyfully, by whatever strange road he may have traveled to his goal of moral excellence.

But generally this maxim does not mean sincerity of life in the form of godliness; it means that it does not matter what a man believes, so that he only believes it sincerely.

Now there are mingled with religious teachings many things which have no direct relation to godliness, and about which it does not make much difference what a man believes. There are some men who think that a minister ought to preach in certain vestments. Others think that it makes no difference what vestments he preaches in, so that he preaches well. It does not make much difference what a man believes about these things. Some believe much and some little in ordinances; and I do not think it makes much difference what a man believes respecting such matters. There are various things that have no relation to

life and duty, about which it does not make much difference what a man believes. We believe in the Sabbath day: many Quakers do not. We believe in an authoritative creed: many Quakers do not. We believe in Church organizations: many Quakers do not. And yet there are no more godly men than are to be found among the Society of Friends, who set aside Church organizations, and creeds, and days, and almost all the external framework by which we administer religion. They have good men, and I trust that we have good men also; showing that men may believe either way on some questions, so that they believe honestly. All art has its science; all religious truth has its philosophy; and in respect to many philosophies of truth, it may be said that it makes no immediate difference in personal piety what view a man takes of them.

There has been in the world a great deal of persistence and exactitude in the statement of religious truths and in the observance of religious ordinances, and these things have been made to appear to be much more than they really were; and it is a part of the reaction from this persistence and this exactitude that leads men to say, "A man may be a churchman, and yet a knave; a man may be a theologian, and yet a bad man; and it does not make much difference, after all, what a man believes."

We see thousands of men sedulously instructed in high doctrine, and made scrupulous and exact in their belief, who yet, in all matters of worldly integrity, fall far below the average of their fellow-men; and, on the other hand, we see many men brought up loosely as respects theological truth, who yet, in questions of truth and duty, are exact and scrupulous. No man can help seeing the discrepancy, and it is not strange that the conviction should be arrived at by many that a man's belief does not have much to do with him.

The first question, then, that arises, is this: What are we to understand by a man's belief? Do we understand by it simply those things of which he has an intellectual concep-

tion? Do *they* amount to a belief? Truth that touches a man not merely through a cold perception, but through some warm feeling—that is the kind of truth the Scripture teaches to constitute belief. It may be intellectually conceived; but no moral truth and no social truth is ever presented so as to be believed, unless it be presented in such a way as to carry sympathy and feeling with it—and that is not the case with all kinds of truth. Physical truths, scientific truths, do not touch the feelings, and do not need to. Arithmetic deals with truths that have no relation directly except with the understanding. They never come with desire, sorrow, pity, or emotion of any sort. But all truths that relate to dispositions in men, to moral duties—they never stop with the understanding, but touch the feeling as well. A man can not be said to believe a moral truth unless he believes it so that it carries some emotion with it. And, in this respect, it makes a great difference what a man believes.

Let us, then, look at this a little in the light of the experience of men in this world. In regard to the truths of the physical economy of the globe, does it make any difference what a man believes? Would it make any difference to a machinist whether he thought lead was as good for tools as steel? Would it make any difference to a man in respect to the industries of life if he thought that a triangle was as good as a circular wheel in machinery? In respect to the quality of substances, the forms of substances, the combination of substances, and the nature of motive powers, does success depend upon *sincere* believing or on *right* believing? Suppose a man should think that it made no difference what he believed, and should say to himself, "I wish to raise corn, but I have not the seed; so I will take some ashes and plant them; and I believe sincerely that they are as good as corn"—would he have a crop of corn? What would his sincerity avail? The more sincere he was, the worse it would be for him; for if he were not sincere, he might slip away and get a little corn, and plant that. In all material things, the more sincere

you are, if you are right, the better; but the more sincere you are, if you are wrong, the worse. In the latter case, sincerity is the mallet that drives home the mischief.

How is it in respect to commercial matters? Just now a great many are manufacturing articles for the army. Does it make no difference whether a man thinks that cornstalks and sticks are as good as muskets? Does it make no difference whether a man thinks that cotton and wool, dust and sweepings, are as good for blankets as real wool? Does it make no difference with the sale of a man's goods whether they are manufactured of one material or another? If a business man believes right in respect to his business, he prospers; and if he believes wrong, he does not prosper.

How is it in respect to navigation? Does any man say, "I have my own theories about astronomy, and I will sail my ship according to them? I do not believe the talk of the books on this subject; and it does not make much difference what a man believes respecting it." Does it make no difference what a man believes about charts? Suppose the shipmaster should say, "I know the chart says that here are three fathoms of water, that here are two, and that here is one, but I do not believe it; I know that my ship draws sixteen feet of water, but I believe that I can run it over a twelve-feet bar" —does it make no difference what he believes? It makes all the difference between shipwreck and safety.

Throughout the whole realm of physical truth, a man is bound to believe, not only sincerely, but *correctly*. In business, in manufacturing, in navigation, in all things that relate to the conduct of men in secular affairs, men must be right —not merely sincere.

Take one thing farther. There are affectional and social truths. Does it make no difference what a man believes in respect to these? Is there no difference between pride, vanity, and selfishness on the one hand, and tenderness, sympathy, and love on the other? If a man has social intercourse, does it make no difference what view he takes of

these things? Will it make no difference with his conduct if he thinks that pride and love are about the same thing, and that one is a proper substitute for the other? His sincerity makes the mischief worse, in such a case.

It is only when we come to moral grounds that men begin to urge this maxim with any considerable degree of confidence. They reject it in its application to material truths, to physical sciences, to business, to social intercourse in life, and hold to the necessity of correct belief. It is not until they come to religious truths that men begin to say, "It does not make much difference what a man believes."

Let us take the lower forms of moral truth, and see if it is so in our daily intercourse. You go to church, and hear your minister preach about the necessity of believing certain great doctrines, and on your way home you say, "It is not of so much importance what a man believes, if he is only sincere in it." When you get home, you find that there is an altercation between the boy and the nurse. There is a lie between them somewhere. And the child falls back on your theory, and says, in respect to the wrongfulness of lying, "Father, I do not think it makes much difference what one believes, if he is only sincere." What do you think about this theory now?

You are bringing up your children. You can bring them up to believe in truth and honesty, or otherwise. Do you not desire to bring them up to believe that honesty is the best policy? Do you not desire to bring them up to believe that purity stands connected with their prosperity in after life? Do you not feel the greatest solicitude about the teaching of their minds? Are you not determined that they shall be brought up to distinguish between truth and lies, honor and dishonor, purity and impurity, nobleness and vulgarity? How particular you are when it is moral truth applied to the rearing of your children! How long would you keep a schoolmaster or a schoolmistress in a common school or an academy who held, in respect to these subjects, as you hold

in respect to religious matters, that it does not make any difference what a person believes?

As it is with the lower forms of moral truth, so experience teaches us it is with the higher forms of moral truth. There is a definite and heaven-appointed connection between the things a man holds to be true, and the results that follow in that man's mind.

All truths are not indeed alike important, and all truths do not show the effects of being believed or rejected with equal rapidity. There are many truths which bear such a relation to our every-day life, that the fruit of believing or rejecting appears almost at once. These are spring truths, that come up and bear fruit early in the season. There are other truths that require time for working out their results. They are summer truths, and the fruit of belief or disbelief does not ripen till July or August. Other truths, in respect to showing the results of belief or disbelief, are like late autumnal fruits, that require the whole winter to develop their proper juices. But in these last the connection is just as certain, although it is longer in making itself appear, as in the first, where the distance between cause and effect is shortest, and the development is most rapid.

Thus it is a matter of great importance whether a man believes in his obligation to God or not; whether he believes that he is sinful or not; whether he believes in the necessity of the influence of the Spirit in regeneration. A man's belief in respect to all of these is very important, but his belief in respect to some of them is more important than it is in respect to others. In respect to some of them it shows its results immediately, and in respect to others remotely. But there is no way of holding any great religious truth that does not, first or last, work out a result answering exactly to the nature of the thing believed.

A man's belief is not the only thing that works upon him. There is a great mistake in saying that as a man believes so is he, if you mean that his character depends upon his belief

in any technical theological truth. What a man is depends in a great measure upon his father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and friends; that is, it depends partly on the things that he believes, and partly upon the influences that are working upon him in the family, in the society, and in the party to which he belongs. There are a thousand and one circumstances that have much to do with what a man is; and his character is not formed alone by his technical beliefs.

Let us apply the foregoing reasonings and explanations to the more important truths which we are appointed to preach.

We preach, then, that this life is a very transient scene; that we are strangers and pilgrims here; that we are started here to be transplanted; that we are undergoing a process of education in this life with reference to a life to come. The prime truth which we preach is the transitoriness of the life that now is, and the permanence of the future life; and it is of supreme importance what a man believes in regard to that truth. If a man says, either practically or theoretically, "My existence in this world is all my life;" if he ignores the other life, and says, "I shall live just as long as I live here, and no longer," his character and conduct will be very different from what they would be if he believed in a life beyond the grave. A man that has no belief in the future will study how to extract the most happiness from this life. He who believes that his life will not extend beyond sixty or seventy years, can never have such inspirations and heroisms as he experiences who believes that he shall live as long as God Almighty lives—forever and forever.

We declare, next, that in this life men live imperfect and sinful lives, and do much that is wrong by voluntary transgression, as well as from the infirmities which come from crudeness and ignorance. Does it make no difference whether a man believes he is sinful or not? If a man is sick, does it make no difference whether he knows it or not? If a man has a disease working in his system, does it make no difference whether he understands it, and acts accordingly, or not?

If a man's soul is diseased, does it make no difference whether he believes that or not?

We are taught in the Word of God that all men are sin-struck, and that every man that lives needs the grace, and forbearance, and forgiveness of God, and moral renovation at the hands of God. If a man believes that he is good enough, of course he becomes listless, and heedless, and inattentive. If another man by his side believes that he is sinful, and needs to be born again, with what a constantly quickened and watchful conscience must he needs live! and how, with all his moral power, must he perpetually strive to live a godly life! Some men believe that, though we ought to become good, goodness is exclusively the creature of our own volition; that all men have a spark of goodness in them, and need but to kindle that to a flame, in order to be pervaded by goodness; that we are all good in a small measure, and that, to become very good, we have only to cultivate the goodness we have. But the Scripture teaches us that the beginnings of our spiritual life must be founded in the power of God—that they must be increased by communication of our heart with the heart of God. Here are two radically opposite views. Does it make no difference which a man takes? One leads to morality of a lower kind, and the other to religious emotions and a religious life. They diverge, and go in opposite directions. It is not my business to show which is best, but to show that one goes one way and the other another.

Does it make no difference what a man believes in respect to the character of God, the nature of the divine government in this world, its claims upon us, and our obligations under it? If a man believes that God sits above, indifferent to the affairs of this life, and too quiescent to attend to the little disturbances of sin, and that he overlooks transgression, that man must inevitably come to a state of moral indifference. But if a man believes that God can not possibly look upon sin with allowance, that he abhors iniquity, and that, unless

we turn from our wicked ways, he will lay his hand on his sword, and set himself forth as the maintainer of law, and justice, and integrity, that man can not help being morally solicitous. Does it make no difference what a man believes on these subjects?

Go into New York, and in the Sixth Ward you shall find two representative men. One says, "I voted for the judge, and helped put him where he is, and he will wink at my crimes. I can drink as much as I please, on Sundays and on week-days, and he will not disturb me. He is easy and good-natured, and he is not going to be hard with me if I do break the laws a little." And the man, because he believes that the judge does not care for his wickedness, and will not punish him, grows bold and corrupt in transgression. But at length he is arraigned, he is brought before the court, and he finds there, instead of his bribed judge, a white-faced man —not red-faced; one of those men with a long head upward —not backward and downward; a man with a full sense of the value of justice and truth. The culprit begins his shuffling excuses. The judge listens to none of them; he reads the law, and says, "Your conduct is herein condemned," and sends him away to receive his just deserts. When the man has expiated his crime, he goes around in the same ward, and says, "You must walk straight hereafter. The judge that sits on the bench now is not the jolly old judge that used to sit there. If you go before him, he will make you smart." Does it not make a difference what a man believes about a judge? If he believes that he is a lenient, conniving judge, does it not make him careless? and if he believes that he is a straightforward, just judge, does it not make him afraid of transgression?

Now lift up the judge's bench, and make it the judgment seat; and take out the human judge, and put God Almighty there. If men believe him to be an all-smiling God—a God that is all sunshine; an all-sympathizing God—a God that is nothing but kindness, and goodness, and gentleness, they say

to themselves, "We will do as we have a mind to." Take away that miserable slander upon the revealed character of God, and lift up the august front of Justice, on whose brow love proudly sits, and let men see that there is a vast Heart of love and gentleness indeed, but one that will by no means clear the guilty, and they will take more heed to their conduct. Does it, then, make no difference what a man believes about God's nature, and his manner of dealing with men? It makes all the difference between laxity and earnestness; between an endeavor to live truly and no endeavor at all in that direction; between right and wrong conduct.

What, then, is the application, finally, of this? Why, my Christian friends, it is just this: that, according to the tenor of the passage from which our text is taken, it makes all the difference in the world what you believe in respect to those truths that are connected with godliness—with purity of thought, purity of motive, purity of disposition. You must believe right about them. About those truths that are related to the ordinances of the Church; to the framework of the Church; to the question as to whether the ministry are successors of the apostles, or whether each one receives his commission direct from the Spirit of God in his heart—about those truths you may believe either way. You may believe that the Episcopal, the Methodist, the Baptist, the Congregational, or the Presbyterian Church is the true Church; you may believe that the Sabbath should be observed in this or in that way—you may believe any of these things, and be a good man. But with reference to the truths that are related to the character of man as a sinner having need of a spiritual change; with reference to the truths that stand related to man's responsibility to God, and to the government of God; with reference to the truths that relate to your immortality—with reference to all these great vital, experimental truths of the Bible, if you believe at all, you must believe right, or woe be upon you! There is a right way and a wrong way of believing in respect to them. The wrong

way leads to disaster, and the right way to benefit. Although with regard to ordinances, and creed-forms, and usages, it does not matter much how a man believes, yet with regard to those truths that relate to his immortal well-being it is very important how he believes.

If there are any truths to be indifferent about, they are those that relate to your worldly good; and if there are any truths that you can not afford to be indifferent about, they are those that relate to your character, to your immortality, and to the eternity that awaits you. Indeed, your character and destiny depend upon your beliefs in truth.

If, then, any of you have hitherto been reading the Word of God as a book of curiosity, I beseech you remember that it is not made known to you for the purpose of curiosity. It is made known to you to be your guide from sin, from sorrow, from earthly trouble, toward immortality and toward glory. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Ah! the way a man reads the Bible—how much that depends upon his necessity. I have unrolled the chart of the coast many and many a time, particularly in these later days, since there has been so much interest attached to it. I have gone along down with my finger, and followed the shoals and depths in and out of this harbor and that, and imagined a light-house here, and a light-house there, that were marked on the chart, and have looked at the inland country lining the shore, and it has been a matter of interest to me, to be sure. But suppose I had been in that equinoctial gale that blew with such violence, and had had the command of a ship off the coast of Cape Hatteras, and the light-house had not been in sight, and my spars had been split, and my rigging had been disarranged, and my sails had been blown away, and I had had all I could do to keep the ship out of a trough of the sea, and I had been trying to make some harbor, how would

I have unrolled the chart, and with two men to help me hold it, on account of the reeling and staggering of the vessel, looked at all the signs, and endeavored to find out where I was!

Now when I sit in my house, where there is no gale, and with no ship, and read my chart out of curiosity, I read it as you sometimes read your Bible. You say, "Here is the headland of depravity; and there is a light-house—born again; and here is the channel of duty." And yet every one of you has charge of a ship—the human soul. Evil passions are fierce winds that are driving it. This Bible is God's chart for you to steer by, to keep you from the bottom of the sea, and to show you where the harbor is, and how to reach it without running on rocks or bars.

If you have been reading this book to gratify curiosity; if you have been reading it to see if you could not catch a Universalist; if you have been reading it to find a knife with which to cut up a Unitarian; if you have been reading it for the purpose of setting up or taking down a bishop; if you have been reading it to establish or overthrow any sect —if you have been reading it so, then stop. It is God's medicine-book. You are sick. You are mortally struck through with disease. There is no human remedy for your trouble. But here is God's medicine-book. If you read it for life, for health, for growth in righteousness, then blessed is your reading; but if you read it for disputation and dialectical ingenuities, it is no more to you than Bacon's "Novum Organum" would be.

It is the book of life; it is the book of everlasting life; so take heed how you read it. In reading it, see that you have the truth, and not the mere semblance of it. You can not live without it. You die forever unless you have it to teach you what are your relations to God and eternity. May God guide you away from all cunning appearances of truth set to deceive men, and make you love the real truth! Above all other things, may God make you honest in interpreting it, and applying it to your daily life and disposition!

XIV.

Christianity a Vital Force.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, March 22d, 1868.

Christianity a Vital Force.

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."—John, vi., 63.

Not that which man can *state* is Christianity: that which men *live* under certain conditions of inspiration—that is Christianity. It is the *living* form which truth takes, not the form which truth takes in a merely speculative statement. Christianity is a living power. It has poetry in it, but Christianity is not a poem. It has the element of reasoning in it, yet Christianity is not a philosophy. If you should gather up all the truths in Christianity and give them appropriate statement, it would not become a system of theology, or, if it became a system of theology, it would no longer be Christianity.

A system of philosophy which includes in it every thing which belongs to Christ and to a Christian life may and does have its uses, but, after all, it is not a living power; and Christ said that his religion was, that what he taught was not *word*-forms, which were just heard in the ear—it was that which sprang up in the mind by the power of the Holy Ghost, in consequence of such teaching; it was a living thing in man, as it was a living thing in himself. In other words, there is a subtle life-power, and it is this life-power that is the true Christianity. What is a plant, though it be perfect in all points, in form and color, if it have not in it that mysterious principle which philosophers call the vital element? It is then no longer a plant. The dried plants of a herbarium may be souvenirs, but they are not living plants; the life has gone out. And so also it is with this human body when the

vital power ceases; when one has just died by accident, and not one element is lost of outward life or form. There is every organ; every member; every fibre; every drop of blood—and yet the body is not a man. What was it that made it a man? It was the *life*-force.

It is not my arm, or my foot, or my head, or my blood, or all of them together, that makes me a man; it is something which is using all these things, and which we call the vital principle. It is that that makes the man; and all these other things together, without this vital force, amount to nothing, else a cunningly carved statue would be a man. Nature is not simply that vast round of things which we see. There is a life-force (or, as philosophers in our day are pleased to call it, "force," which is apparently the only God of philosophy), without which the whole framework is dead as a picture. Out of that life-force of which we constitute the living organism in the individual comes comprehensively the system of the world. It is precisely in analogy with this that Christianity is to the nature of man a divine force, spiritualizing him. It is not the doctrine which is employed, or the instrument; it is not the illustrations which are employed, or the reasonings which may be deduced, that give to Christianity its potency. It is that something else besides, over and above all these interior and these external elements. These are what Christ called the flesh, and he says that, in and of themselves, they profit nothing. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." This is Paul's meaning when he contrasts his method of teaching with that which prevailed among the Greeks. Theirs was external, his internal. Theirs was merely human influence. He recognized this internal agency in terms as well as in general statement. I did not depend, he says, upon wisdom, or upon polished exterior, or admirable adaptation of means to the end. He undertook to produce effects by no such methods as belonged to the ordinary schools of men. I determined to know nothing but Christ, and I determined not to know him except in

this way—crucified—that you might be strong in all the power of God, in the power of the soul. There was an interior something that he was feeling after and expounding. In the next place, he declares the Gospel explicitly to be—what?. a history of the life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ? Nay! For although all these things are in the Gospel history, he declares that the essence of that Gospel was the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. There is in the Gospel a divine meaning, acting through its teachings upon the human soul in such a way as to transform it from a lower to a higher sphere; and that process by which man is thus transformed and changed—*that* is Christianity. It is a vital force; and a vital force not abstractly considered, but operating upon the human soul.

It may be stated, then, generally, that Christianity is a latent spiritual power, designed and adapted to translate man from a lower and physical life into a higher and spiritual life. That is Christianity.

Let us, then, consider farther,

First. If this be Christianity, what is a Christian life?

Second. Some good reasons why men should enter upon such a life.

What, then, in the first place, is a Christian life? It is the life of the human soul, derived not alone from natural laws—not alone from the incitements of society—procured not by human causes, but distinctively and peculiarly a life which is derived from God. It is a life which results from the union of our mind with the divine mind. It is distinctively peculiar in this, that it is not an occasional excitement and orgasm; it is not the access, as the ancients believe, of a divine spirit once in a while, but it is the indwelling of the divine influence in the human soul in such a way as that man has an incitement and an inspiration higher than any that can come from natural and material causes. It begins in this fact (this is the vital fact—it is the key-note of the whole theme), that there is a divine power which lapses into the human soul, and

that by that divine power all the faculties of a man become competent to do or to be what they can not do or be when they are left to the laws of nature or to the laws of society.

You may call this miraculous; I do not. It is only the development of a higher element in nature. You may call this supernatural; I do not think it is supernatural. The action of the divine mind upon the human mind is as much in the course of nature as the construction of the human soul itself. Under such influence is developed a personal experience, differing from any that could have been otherwise developed — a personal experience which awakens in us and finally perfects a character like that of Christ; which educates our nature and our habits into a likeness to Christ's nature and habits; and I think these may be stated in three words—PURITY, LOVE, ACTIVITY.

Purity—including all that is meant by righteousness, uprightness, integrity, truth, justice, fidelity.

Love—developing all that is taught by God, by Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, of benignity, of pity, of sympathy, of mercy.

Activity—the inevitable employment of all this resurrection power in the soul, as a force, upon other men, and upon the world itself.

As Christ was pure, loving, and energetic, so every one that becomes a disciple of Christ has excited in him a tendency toward universal purity, universal love, and universal activity. This life not only begins by divine influence, but continues and develops itself all the way through by communion with God, as its indispensable cause. It is not a work that is completed and then left; that which began must continue. Therefore Christ is called the "author and the *finisher* of our faith." He that awakens in us this new tendency, this spiritual tendency, broods upon the soul—that is, constantly nourishes it and stimulates it day by day, and develops it into the perfect character of a man in Christ Jesus. These are, then, the original elements of a Christian

life; the power of God working in the human soul. Under that power, the development of the soul into purity, love, and activity is natural, as is also the continuity of life under such a disclosure and development, by the constant presence and influence of the Spirit of God.

Let us, *secondly*, look at some of the reasons why one should enter upon such a life as this, and why this should be our scheme of life and model of character.

No one in our intelligent community, I suppose, ever passes to years of maturity without having had, either practically or theoretically, some conception of a character. Some men project their character into a material form. Their only idea of character is what they will get, or what they will have in their external condition. With some, the conception of character is to own a hundred ships, and to get a revenue from every one of them; to be the owner of more acres of land than any other man in all the state. Another man's idea of character consists in the holding of such an amount of wealth, of bonds, of mortgages, of evidences of debt, and what not, that they shall make him a fiscal prince. Such men have a certain conception of character, and it expresses itself by outward forms, by materialization. In youth, some generous natures develop a character largely ideal. They live, or dream, of what they shall be—of what they shall achieve, perchance, in scholarship. They paint pictures of fancy; but their ideal achievements are only in one direction, and are to be attained only through the intellectual forces. Other men imagine themselves artists; and the sun paints not so many pictures in the livelong year as they paint in their imagination. Their conception of character is comparatively only in the æsthetic direction. Other men purpose to be speakers; and they sway (in fancy) tumultuous assemblies; and they hear themselves (as nobody else shall hear them) pouring tides of eloquence upon listening ears. They dream these things; we call them "air-castles." There is still another conception—of home-life, of a love, of a lover, a companion,

of joy and blossoming in the household—of a palace of delight. But do you not observe, running through all these last, the same materializing elements? Your property is not *you*—land-owner, ship-builder, finance-controller! There is the *I* that lies behind the accomplishment. There is a living, controlling being behind all achievements. Character is the fashioning of that. I propound to you not the modes of character that exist and are operative in this world, but I declare to you that the Christian character, distinctly set forth, is the very ideal of true manhood; a "man in Christ Jesus" —a Christian, as the Bible would fashion him, is the true model of a man.

1. I urge you, therefore, to accept, not these secular ideals of character, but the true Christian one, because, in the first place, the divine power, as a living influence upon your souls, is the only reconstructive force adequate to your need. The ideals of character which men form, exterior to themselves, really have no transforming power upon their dispositions. What man needs is a perfect control of his animal nature, of his selfishness, his pride, his secularity. What he needs is the predominance of the spiritual over the carnal elements. Without that, man can not be man. The great mass of the human family are yet but animals, with a little garnishing of manhood here and there. For the most part, spiritual qualities are but as flowers in a button-hole. The body, from head to foot, is one great mass of flesh, with here and there a morality or a virtue stuck in as a little decoration. What man needs is a complete transformation, so that the emanating influences of life shall no longer proceed from the material, the selfish, and the secular instincts. We want a reconstructive power that shall bring the spiritual elements into the ascendency, and hold the others down. Now men are mostly like boys, attempting to ride horses that run away with them, because the horse is more than the rider. The rider must be more than the horse. We want to sit astride of the world, astride of all fierce passions and of

all carnal influences, and control them in such a way that they shall not run away with us, but be completely subject to all the higher spiritual elements that belong to our nature. As it is the summer sky that gives the harvest leave to get ripe, so it is God over us that determines whether there shall be developed in us this spiritual power. Out of Christ, man will still be secular. In Christ you will become spiritual, but *only* in him; no man can develop this spirituality except through the power which comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. No other name is given under heaven whereby he can do this. This is the only influence which has proved itself competent to do it, and it is declared that it is the only influence that ever will do it.

2. This developing power in the soul reveals the only harmonizing elements around which all of a man's nature can reorganize itself. In this scheme, *love* is the point of crystallization. "Be ye perfect," says our Savior, "as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." How was he perfect? Be ye perfect, not as other men think to be; not as warriors are perfect; not as statesmen are perfect. Do not, in other words, adopt the ideal of man, but accept God's ideal, and be perfect according to his ideal of perfection. What was that?

"He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Impartial, disinterested love, beneficence, is the model of God's perfection. The direction of the Savior is, then, When you attempt to become perfect, organize around that central element of love, even as God's whole nature is organized about it. There is no other element than divine love upon which we can organize our dispositions and perfectly harmonize our characters. Although men do contrive to give predominance to the feelings which flow from this element, there is yet more or less of discord or of rebellion in the soul. Crown pride, and cause it to walk through the chambers of the soul, and there are many faculties which

hide themselves and say, I will not bow down to Pride, if it be king over me. Crown vanity, and there will be many parts of the soul that will not yield to this newly-crowned king, but will say, Nay, I am higher than thou, and I will never bow down to King Vanity. Crown the reason, and there are many feelings that will say, We will no more rise up before crowned Reason, and own it our king, than the flowers will rise up before an iceberg and call it Summer. Crown beauty, and there will be commotion in all the soul; but there is not in all the soul one single faculty that, under stress of temptation, under provocation, or under trial, will call out, "O King Beauty, save me!" Crown the conscience, and although more of the faculties of the soul will follow that than any other of the leaders I have assumed, yet what will ensue? Crown conscience—its crown is of iron; its sceptre is relentless. If conscience be king, the soul has a despot on the throne; and often and often there be many members of a man's nature that reluct, and resist, and refuse to obey. Bring into the ascendency *love*, and crown it, and there is not one part of reason that doth not before Love say, "It is my master." There is nothing in all the imagination that is not willing to twine around about love and say, "Love rules; and it truly inspires." Pride and vanity, and all the ambitious forces of the soul, will bow down in the train of love; and if that stand king in the soul, all the faculties can find their place, and harmoniously move round about the well-adjusted centre. It is the only feeling around which you can reconstruct the human character.

3. It is only in a character fashioned upon the model of the Lord Jesus Christ that we can find relief and reconciliation from things seemingly oppugnant or hopelessly antagonistic; nor, in any other scheme of character, can you reconcile aspiration and content. In all ancient experience and in all ancient philosophy, perpetual aspiration was the destruction of content, until content became almost the synonym of stupidity, and aspiration was restless and enfeebled in all its de-

sires. It still sought, but seldom found. In Christ both these elements are perfectly reconciled. There is no bound to aspiration; for behind all the events which are transpiring in this life are so many educators, so many instruments by which aspiration is held in check, and content in our situation and circumstances results.

Where, under any other scheme of reconstruction in the soul, can you reconcile conscience and peace? How can you bring a man into condemnation with himself? How, measuring day by day, can you show that, according to any just rule or measure, a man is living in sin and transgression, promising and breaking his word, striving and failing, building only to mar? How can you bring conscience to have its perfect work, condemning, yet inspiring and stimulating? It can be done just as the mother does it, who never allows her child's ideal to sleep; who by word, as well as by example, perpetually stirs up her child to think better things, to aspire to better things, to reach up to better things; chides all delinquencies, and yet so chides that the same arm and the same lip that chides brings also quiet and rest. Love can do what conscience can not do, and what ideality can not do. Now in Jesus Christ there is perpetual measuring or judgment of conscience in condemnation, and yet there is perpetual resurrection of love and help which more than balances all condemnation.

Ordinarily men are as pendulums between the eighth and the seventh of Romans, taking in condemnation upon one side, and hope on the other; and so they oscillate, vibrating between hope and fear. But there is a reconciliation. It is a reconciliation, however, that can not take place except in a soul that is in the possession of Christ, and subject to the blessed rule of love. In that soul there is perfect reconciliation, so that you may feel every day, "I come short; I am a sinner, and yet I am reconciled; I rebel, yet I love; I disobey, yet I long to obey; I am sorry, yet I am comforted; I am my own, yet I am more his." The most opposite experiences take

place, and are perfectly reconciled by the transforming influence of that love which is shed abroad in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost.

I do not infer this logically, but I state it as the actual, practical experience of thrice ten thousand who live now, and of many more who have lived, have triumphed, and are now at rest.

4. The divine power in the soul harmonizes man with his fellow-men. All men are naturally aggressive. Hitherto it has been an aggression mainly by means of combativeness and destructiveness. The whole world has been in contest. Men have ground upon each other with perpetual attrition, or assaulted each other by perpetual violence. Now Christ intensifies, if it were possible, the impetus to aggression, but it is the aggression of the spiritual and moral forces—no longer of the animal and physical. It is the aggressiveness of beneficence, not of malevolence. Without Christ, human activity is merely of the organizing forces. All the constructive forces that men employ are selfish. Man is like the coral builder, which is a little worm, in its own little cell, doing its own little work, adding its own little substance to the work of others, and dying where it began, leaving the reef somewhat enlarged by what was only a selfish architecture. Christ represents his kingdom by a wind:

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Come, O south wind, bring vapor from the sea, and warmth from the equator; bring birds and grass, spring and summer: come, O breath of heaven! spread wide abroad over all the continent; come to the great and come to the little; come to the poor and come to the rich; come to the sick man through his lattice; come to all, bringing—no man can measure what, for abundance; no man can tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; it wanders up and down the hills, and through all the valleys, and makes itself known from the ben-

efits which it brings; yet no man can see the viewless course of the air. So it is with the spirit of beneficence—the true Christ-like spirit in the human soul. It comes, we know not whence; it goes, we can not tell how or where. It is universal. It is endless. It is bountiful as the summer, and blessed as God.

5. The divine power in the human soul gives to the whole economy of human life, and to the whole flow of events also, a reconciliation which nothing else can. Life is full of inconstancy, judged from our philosophy. All literatures agree alike in this, that things have been unequal in this world; that there seems to have been no universal and uniform moral government; that causes do not seem to have been constant; that goodness seemingly is punished, and evil rewarded; that men have groaned, or sang, or sighed, as the seeming creatures of circumstance. There seems to each individual consciousness a strange adjustment of the events that are happening in our lives; and every day we see things that we can not account for; and men will never be done asking about mysteries and "mysterious providences." There is no reconciliation apparently, from the human stand-point, for conflicting events. There never yet was found, and I think will never be, a key that shall solve these mysteries. But if you teach men the truth that is in Christ Jesus; that the Spirit of God is fashioning, not our outward life (except as it stands related to the more glorious result), but the inward and spiritual life; that Christ is not working for the results which appear in this life alone, but for results which shall appear in the life hereafter—that reconciles them; or, if it does not reconcile, it settles. I do not care what befalls you; you do not yourself care what befalls you, so long as you have the certainty that the end of it shall be right. Your ship goes to sea; a storm follows it; you get no tidings of it; yet, if you have confidence in her crew and in her commander, if you are sure that she will make the port, it matters very little to you whether she has more or less of stormy voyage. Storms

may even be an impetus and a help. So in human life. Once give me to believe that I am a child of God; that my Father's Spirit has reinhabited my soul; that all that is happening to me, whether seemingly good or evil, is the working out of a higher nature from my lower one—once let me believe that this life is one from which there is to come a spiritual being, and that the oppressions, the raspings, the piercings, the sorrows, the anguish, the disappointment, the ten thousand inequalities, the rude buffetings, the downthrows, and all the events which are happening to me here are but the preparation for that higher life, and its development in me, and I am content.

Once, on a summer's day, I went with my brother to extract a crystal from the rock. With a mighty sledge-hammer he vigorously dealt blow after blow upon the rock, and chipped off piece after piece. At last the top of the crystal appeared. Then one might see what he was after, for it had not shown upon the outer surface of the rock. When the crystal appeared, then the whole strife became how so to break the rock away from it, and how so to strike the rock as to extract the crystal. The rock was good for nothing; the crystal was every thing.

The soul is man's crystal, and the body is but the incasing rock that holds it. God's providences are smiting upon the rock, and breaking and cutting it away, and extracting the precious crystal, which is worth incomparably more than its setting in the rock.

So we get, from the Christian's stand-point, a harmonious view of all the events of life, if not in their detail, yet in their more general aggregate results.

This is the only view, also, which redeems death from being a catastrophe, and exalts it into a victory. There could be no greater contrast than that which exists between the Old Testament and the New in this regard. In the Old Testament, death is a misfortune; in the New, a coronation. In the Old, death is a weakness; in the New, strength. In the

Old, death is the end; in the New, the beginning. In the Old, death is a thing for tears; in the New, an occasion for songs and rejoicing. Men dying in the Old Testament times *did* die; men dying in the Christian dispensation, and in a Christian hope, do *not* die. In the Old Testament, death took men; in the New Testament, Christ comes for them, and bears them home to glory. All the way through, and in every point of view, the character of the Christian is thus set forth, in the New Testament, as filled with inspiration, with power, with hope, with victory.

1. If this view be correct, I remark that there is a very great difference between reasoning upon Christianity and testing Christianity. No man is competent to determine questions in regard to Christianity until he has put his whole soul into the attitude of Christ; until he has drank in the spirit of his Master. Doubt in respect to historical questions is one thing, and quite a different thing from doubt as to the reality and potency of the system itself. If you were to set aside every single historical element, but were nevertheless to put yourself in the attitude which Christ requires, and open your heart to the interpreting spirit which he sends, your consciousness would be more than all your doubts, all your reasonings to the contrary. What do I care if it should be told to me that Christianity stumbles in philosophy at every step? Let me become personally the recipient of that divine influence, and my experience is worth more to me than other people's reasonings. You may demonstrate that it is not possible for a flower to grow in a given vale, but if I find it there, what is your reasoning worth to me? Flowers are generally the best evidence as to where they will or will not grow, botanists to the contrary notwithstanding.

I have bought tropical morning-glory seeds for the greenhouse, with the assurance of the seedsman that I could not raise them out of doors. I *did* raise them out of doors; that is the answer I gave to him. "But," he says, "it is not possible, in our summer, to raise them;" but I *did* it. "The sum-

mer is not long enough, or warm enough, to raise them here." I *have raised* them, and I shall not give up my argument upon that question.

If a man says that there never was a Christ, or that he was only a man, I answer that I have found him of whom Moses and the prophets spake. I have asked him, "What wilt thou?" and he has told me; I have put my soul and my heart, as he has commanded me, into his hand. Will any man now undertake to reason me out of the result? I *know* in whom I have trusted, and know what he has done for me. Is the music of my life, the inspiration of every faculty, the transformation of my views, the regeneration of my hopes—are these nothing? Am I to go back eighteen hundred years, with the skeptical philosopher, to reason about Jerusalem, and about the Lord Jesus Christ, and not reason upon my own actual, daily, positive experience?

If a man, intelligent in other respects, not given to enthusiasm, not diseased by morbid feelings, but rational in all things, whom you would believe in respect to any and all of the transactions of daily life, bears witness, not alone, but with multitudes—with a long succession of witnesses—that there is such a fact as Christ in the soul, and the hope of glory; that there is such an experience as that the Holy Ghost descends into the soul, cleanses it, inspires it, reorganizes it, fills it with faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and that it abides with us—is not that testimony to be accepted? Will you accept a man's reasoning upon things that happened a thousand years ago, and reject his positive testimony in regard to the things that are occurring every day? Nay! When there is a succession of witnesses coming through a period of more than two thousand years down to us, bearing witness in every possible emergency—bearing witness from the stake; from the dungeon; from the battle-field; from the mountain cave; from sick-chambers—when we see human life transformed, and made magnificent and glorious through suffering—characters effulging from weakness and obscurity—when all the record

of the past is made luminous with the memorials of what has been done in men's souls by the power of God through Jesus Christ, are we to take this long cloud of witnesses that have lived but are now passed away, and all that now live and bear the same testimony, and count it all as nothing?

There are praying souls in this house that see more stars every day than are to be seen during a whole lifetime in the encircling heavens; is their testimony nothing?

Did your mother die as the mole dies? and is there no more of your mother than there is of the mole? Is your child dead? Are you not proud to think, rather, that your child can not die any more than your own soul could die? I *know* that there is a life to come. Shall I believe my eye, which is a mere organ of sense, and not believe my soul, which is higher in grade than my eye, in its testimony?

There are multitudes of persons who are asking for argument—asking for reasoning upon the great truths of Christianity. "The words that I speak unto you," says your Master, "are spirit; they are life." Christ's argument to you is this: My son, give me your heart, and you shall never doubt. If you ask me to reason upon the great truths of Christianity with you, I say to you, Give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and see if those effects which he has promised do not follow, and see if they do not amount to an argument transcending in power and validity any other argument that can be produced.

2. If this view of the spiritual or Christian character is correct, is there not reason to fear that many persons who believe themselves to be Christians, and to be perfectly safe, come far short of a true Christian life?

Do not these views mark very clearly the distinction between the life that is wrought by God's power upon the soul, and the ordinary life which springs up under the action of natural causes? If you will read the immortal thirteenth of *Corinthians*, you will learn that though a man have all knowledge, and all faith, and all ordinary charity, and even give his

body to be burned in enthusiasm and in fidelity to his own convictions, yet, if he has not this divine life, all his knowledge is vain, all his eloquence is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and all his charity is as nothing at all.

There are many persons who are moral, and think that they are Christians. There are many persons that are intensely churchly; that love the Sabbath more than they do God; that love the Church more than they do Christ; that love the services of the Church and the circumstances of worship far more than they do the spiritual commands of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is reason to fear that there are many persons who call themselves Christians that have never had the vital change, and do not live in true, spiritual, personal unity with God. Yet no man is a Christian until Christ's Spirit dwells in him. No man is truly a Christian who is not vitalized every day by the mind of God.

3. I remark, once more, that no man can come into this position and become a Christian by his own simple, unaided power. I certainly do not wish to take away the motives for activity, for every man must be a worker with God for his own salvation; but no unaided intelligence, no power of the soul exerted merely by yourself, will be sufficient for you. Unless God by the Holy Ghost works in you, you will come short of that very vivific influence which is the peculiar test and characteristic of the Christian. "If, then, I can not help myself, whose fault is it?" It is not a question of fault. "Without holiness, no man can see the Lord." You can not afford to lose the monitions of the Spirit of God. You can not afford not to be a Christian. The question with you is this: If it be required that the Spirit of God shall move upon my heart, what shall I do? My answer is, God's Spirit is loving and gentle, persuasive and universal. It is distilled upon you as the dews of the night upon the blossoms. It overhangs the earth as the sun overhangs this continent. God knocks at the doors of your heart, of your conscience, and of your understanding; thrice ten thousand times you have resisted him; you have turned away. Open now your

heart; for, although you can not, without the Spirit of God, be a Christian, yet you can not turn your heart toward God with even the sigh of a wish but instantly the Spirit of God is with you. "The bruised reed will he not break, and the smoking flax will he not quench, until he brings forth judgment unto victory." What if you were sick, and were to send for a physician without whose ministrations you could never recover, but when he came there stood in the gateway a fierce dog that would not let him enter? What if, going around your boundaries, he should find armed men here and there that turned him away? What if, peradventure working his way to your door, he should find the door fast, the shutters and windows tightly barred, and no entrance permitted? You might sicken and die needlessly, because, though he has the means of your recovery, you would not give him access.

God's Spirit comes to many and many a man who will not give it admission. Around stand men, with clubs like Hercules, defending the sentry-house of the soul. God's Spirit strives with many and many a man, saying, "I have stood knocking at the door of your soul until my locks are wet with the morning dew; open that I may come in unto you, and abide with you."

Many of you have grieved the Spirit of God through many long years, but it yet comes to you bringing hope, purity, and reconciliation; offering you an entrance into this new life, without which you shall never see the kingdom of heaven. It came with precious, priceless blessings; you have turned away; you have soiled your heart so that it could not dwell there; you have refused it obedience and entrance. Again God's Spirit comes to you, to-day—I know it by the stillness of the house. I know it by your upturned faces and your close attention. There are many among you with whom God's Spirit is even now striving. Grieve not the Spirit of God by which you are to be saved. At last, change—change—and say, Enter, blessed Spirit! enter, and transform my soul into the likeness of God!

XV.

Old Age.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, January 12th, 1868.

Old Age.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."—Ecclesiastes, xii., 1.

This passage, which stands in the midst of a remarkable and eminently practical description of youth and old age, has usually been construed as a dissuasive from pleasure, as a dissuasive from many of the innocent enjoyments of youth; and as teaching that we are to bear in mind the coming of old age, and that we are not, since we are the creatures of an hour, to unduly estimate the transient joys and pleasures of life. If we take into consideration the closing verses of this chapter, I think we shall give another construction to the text: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:" "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. . . . . Fear God, and keep his commandments:" that is the way to remember him—"while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." That is, remembering that there is such a thing as a miserable old age, so conduct yourself in youth by remembering God and obeying his commandments that the misery of old age shall be escaped, and a brighter day be awarded you. In other words, this passage seems to me to be a cautionary suggestion as to the method of so living as to make old age desirable, beautiful, and happy.

Old age is a distant port for which the whole human race

start, toward which they steer. More than half perish at the commencement of the voyage. Should every alternate ship go down before reaching the light-ship off the harbor of New York, it would represent the human race, one half of which dies in infancy. Of the remainder, at least one half perishes before reaching the age of forty-five. If we say that one beyond the age of sixty may be called an old man, probably not a quarter of the human race ever reaches old age. The fact that the average of adult life is placed at thirty-three years is itself a testimony on this subject most remarkable. Men do not, on an average, live out half their days. Eighty years is but a fair term of life, under good conditions and with proper care. The race of man, comprehensively regarded, do not live forty years. One half of life is thrown away, then, in every generation. The economic waste, the enormous depredation upon wealth, upon power, upon happiness, to say nothing of virtue and morality, are worthy the consideration of political economists. Men have a right to old age. It is a part of the allotment of life, and it belongs to every one. Men are defrauded if they do not possess it. They get so much less than belongs to the patrimony which God has provided for them. Sometimes men are defrauded of it by the sins of their parents or of their ancestors. This transmissive law, by which children are punished for the sins of their parents, is silent, yet more august and terrible than was Sinai when all enflamed. Many children come into life, and the experienced eye pronounces it impossible for them to live many years. Parents weep at the strange Providence, and the mysterious dealings of God, when there is neither strangeness nor mystery in it. Thousands and thousands are born who should have had a right in life, but whose hold is so brittle that the first wind shakes them, and they fall like untimely fruit. Some fall by accident, some in the discharge of duties which call them to offer up their lives as a sacrifice for the common weal. The greatest number, however, are deprived of a good old age by their own ignorance or by their

own misconduct; and those that reach old age too often find that it is a land of sorrow. Such is the spectacle that we witness in many instances, that it is not strange that one should desire not to grow old. One dreads to see gray hairs in poverty, in beggary—dependent upon a charity which is as inconstant as the tides. One shrinks from old age when it is full of pains, when it is crippled, shrunken, helpless, hopeless, and hapless, still more when the reason wanes and the second childhood (a kindly name for imbecility) dawns.

Now old age was not designed to be mournful, but beautiful. Old age is a part of the scheme of life, which was designed to be beautiful from beginning to end. It is the close of a symphony, beautiful in its inception, rolling on grandly, and terminating in a climax of sublimity. It is harmonious and admirable, according to the scheme of nature. The charms of infancy, the hopes of the spring of youth, the vigor of manhood, and the serenity and tranquillity, the wisdom and peace of old age—all these together constitute the true human life, with its beginning, middle, and end—a glorious epoch.

The end of summer is often more glorious than the summer itself. October is beyond all comparison the crown of the year; and the word of inspiration saith, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." While a sordid old man, who has corrupted his heart and filled his life with vices, is a hideous spectacle, a pure heart, a sweet nature, a generous and cheerful soul, walking among the young, and mildly manifesting in his own life what are the fruits of true piety, is at once a blessing and encouragement. There is nothing more beautiful than a serene, virtuous, and happy old age; and such an old age belongs to every individual's life, if he only knows how to build it.

Every one of us, but especially those who are beginning in life, is aiming at a serene and happy old age, and I propose to put before you some considerations which shall direct your attention to the methods of attaining it. I beseech you not

to think that it is so far off that you need not consider the subject, for time runs with incredibly swift feet; and although you may now think of yourself as being young or in middle life, yet, long before you are aware of it, you will find that others think you old. Old age is making haste; and there are none of us that can be young long, and many of us have already passed by our youth. There are none so young but they are making haste, swifter than an eagle's flight, toward old age. Now, in the wisdom of God, the way to be happy in old age is the very way of being happy all our life. It should be borne in mind that in old age it is too late to mend; that then you must inhabit what you have built. Old age has the foundation of its joy or its sorrow laid in youth. You are building at twenty. Are you building for seventy? Nay; every stone laid in the foundation takes hold of every stone in the wall up to the very eaves of the building; and every deed, right or wrong, that transpires in youth, reaches forward, and has a relation to all the afterpart of man's life. A man's life is not like the contiguous cells in a bee's honeycomb; it is more like the separate parts of a plant which unfolds out of itself, every part bearing relation to all that antecede. That which you do in youth is the root, and all the afterparts, middle age and old age, are the branches and the fruits, whose character the root will determine.

Let me consider, then, the physical, the secular, the social, the intellectual, and the spiritual elements of preparation for old age.

1. There are many physical elements which enter into the preparation for a profitable and happy old age. The human body is an instrument of pleasure and use, built for eighty years' wear. Every man belongs to an economy in which he has a right to calculate, or his friends for him, on eighty years as a fair term of life. His body is placed in a world adapted to nourish and protect it. Nature is congenial. There are elements enough of mischief in it, if a man pleases to find them out. A man can wear his body out as quickly

as he pleases, destroy it if he will; but, after all, the great laws of Nature are nourishing laws, and, comprehensively regarded, Nature is the universal nurse, the universal physician of our race, guarding us against evil, warning us of it by incipient pains, setting up signals of danger—not outwardly, but inwardly—and cautioning us by sorrows and by pains for our benefit. Every immoderate draft which is made by the appetites and passions is so much sent forward to be cashed in old age. You may sin at one end, but God takes it off at the other. Every man has stored up for him some eighty years, if he knows how to keep them, and those eighty years, like a bank of deposit, are full of treasures; but youth, through ignorance or through immoderate passions, is wont continually to draw checks on old age. Men do not suppose that they are doing it, although told that the wicked shall not live out half their days. I need not go far to find illustrations of premature exhaustion, or, at any rate, of weakness and enfeeblement. I might point you to a dozen instances, without going a mile in any direction, of the truth that unvirtuous men shall not live out half of their days.

Men are accustomed to look upon the excesses of youth as something that belongs to that time. They say that of course the young, like colts unbridled, will disport themselves. There is no harm in colts disporting themselves, but a colt never gets drunk. I do not object to any amount of gayety or vivacity that lies within the bounds of reason or of health, but I do reject and abhor, as worthy to be stigmatized as dishonorable and unmanly, every such course in youth as takes away strength, vigor, and purity from old age. I do not believe that any man should take the candle of his old age and light it by the vices of his youth. Every man that transcends Nature's laws in youth is taking beforehand those treasures that are stored up for his old age; he is taking the food that should have been his sustenance in old age, and exhausting it in riotous living in his youth. Mere gayety and exhilaration are wholesome; they violate no law, moral or physical. I

think a man is not a thorough Christian who is not a cheerful, happy, buoyant Christian. There may be times of public sorrow, and there may be times of religious revivals, when sterner stuff is required; when Christian men have duties to perform that bring into activity only the sterner elements of their character; but these are exceptional cases. The ideal of a Christian manhood is one of cheerfulness, happiness, hopefulness—a manhood full of beauty, of serenity.

I do not object, therefore, to mirth or gayety, but I do object to any man's making an animal of himself by living for the gratification of his own animal passions. People frequently think that to require, in the conduct of youth, that which we expect in later life, has something of puritanism in it. Men have an impression that youth is very much like wine, crude and insipid until it has fermented; but when it has fermented, and thrown down the lees, and the scum has been drawn off, the great body between is sound, and wholesome, and beautiful. I am not one that thinks so. I think that youth is the beginning of the plant life, and that every wart or excrescence is so much enfeeblement of its fruit-bearing power. I do not believe that any man is the better for having learned the whole career of drunkenness or of lust, or the dallyings or indulgences that belong to a morbid life. A young man that has gone through these things may be saved at last, but in after life he has not the sensibility, nor the purity, nor the moral stamina that he ought to have. He has gone through an experience but for which his manhood would have been both stronger and nobler. I thoroughly disbelieve that a man is any better for having, in his youth, passed through an experience that developed his animal nature and his lustful appetites. Excess in youth, in regard to animal indulgences, is bankruptcy in old age.

For this reason, I deprecate late hours, irregular hours, or irregular sleep. People ask me frequently, "Do you think that there is any harm in dancing?" No, I do not. There is much good in it. "Do you, then, object to dancing parties?"

No; in themselves, I do not. But where unknit youth, unripe muscle, unsettled and unhardened nerves are put through an excess of excitement, treated with stimulants, fed irregularly and with unwholesome food, surrounded with gayety which is excessive, and which is protracted through hours when they should be asleep, I object, not because of the dancing, but because of the dissipation. It is taking the time that unquestionably was intended for sleep, and spending it in the highest state of exhilaration and excitement. The harm is not in the dancing itself; for if they danced as do the peasants, in the open air, upon the grass under the trees, and in the day, it might be commended, not as virtuous, but still as belonging to those negative things that may be beautiful. But the wassail in the night, the wastefulness—I will not say of precious hours, for hours are not half so precious as nerves are—the dissipation, continued night after night, and week after week through the whole season, it is this that I deprecate as eating out the very life. Blessed be God for Lent! I am not superstitious of observances, but I am always thankful that there are forty days in the year when folks can rest from their debauches and dissipations; when no round of excessive excitement in the pursuit of pleasure is permitted to come in, and ruin the health and cripple the natural powers of the young.

Irregularity of diet also has its ill effects. It is not the mere question of digestion or of indigestion, of good spirits or of bad spirits to-day; irregular habits in regard to eating and drinking reach forward, and take hold of old age. Children ought to be taught, and parents ought to know enough to teach them, these things. Ignorance of the structure of our bodies may not have been culpable fifty years ago, but, in the light of advancing knowledge, I hold that no Christian parent can but be accountable to God for ignorance of the fundamental laws of health. When I am king, none shall be married until they have passed through the catechism of natural health, and shown that they under-

stand the fundamental principles of it. The appetites of youth, which, either in social or in solitary life, drain down the vitality and impair the constitution, are so many insidious assaults on old age. I would that the young knew how clearly these things are written. God's handwriting is very plain and very legible to those who have eyes to see. There is not an intelligent physician that does not read, as he walks through the street, the secret history of the lives of those whom he meets, and that, too, without following them in their midnight career. I care not to have men come to me and state their secret courses; I can read it in the skin and in the eye. There is not one single appetite or passion that has not its natural language, and every undue indulgence of that appetite or passion leaves that natural language more or less stamped upon the skin, upon the features, upon the expression of the face, or the carriage of the body. There is always some token that tells what men are doing, if they are doing any thing to excess. Pride has its natural language; mirthfulness has; goodness has. Nobody doubts this. So have the passions their natural language. Men think that if they commit their wickedness in secret places, or in the night, that it is not known. It is known, although no man may ever say to them, "Thou art guilty!"

The use of stimulants in youth is another detraction from happiness in old age. Men usually take what they least need. In other words, we follow our strongest faculties, and not our weaker ones; and therefore, if men are excessively nervous, they almost invariably seek to make themselves more so. Men that need the most soothing, the most quiet, drive themselves by the use of the most excessive stimulants. There will come a time, however, when men will be proud of being wholesome, clean, and natural.

Among some dangers and mischiefs flowing from the high development of material science, I look upon one tendency as beneficent: I think that there is a growing approximation toward a higher ideal of physical manhood; and I believe

that there will come a time when a man would just as soon break a limb under the impression that when it is set crooked he would be handsomer, as to indulge in dissipation, or in irregularities of any kind, that tend to disease or impair his natural powers. I believe that man will then have just as much fear of all courses of life that carry with them unhealth, as now he has of maiming, or wounds, or tortures. When that day comes, I think that there will be a general banishment of alcoholic drinks, and a total exclusion of tobacco; indulgence in which, beginning early, is, with very few exceptions, wasteful all the way through life.

I rejoice to say that I was brought up from my youth to abstain from tobacco. It is unhealthy; it is filthy from beginning to end. In rare cases, where there is already some unhealthy or morbid tendency in the system, it is possible that it may be used with some benefit, but ordinarily it is unhealthy. I believe that the day will come when a young man will be proud of not being addicted to the use of stimulants of any kind. I believe that the day will come when not to drink, not to use tobacco, not to waste one's strength in the secret indulgence of passion, but to be true to one's nature, true to God's law, to be round, robust, cheerful, and to be conscious that these elements of health and strength are derived from the reverent obedience of the commandments of God, will be a matter of ambition and endeavor among men.

But there are many that I perceive are wasting their lives and destroying their old age, not through their passions, but through their ambition, and in the pursuit of laudable objects. I know of many artists that are wearing out their lives, day after day, with preternatural excitement of the brain; yet their aims are transcendently excellent. I know of musicians that are wearing out, night and day; yet their ambition is upward and noble. They are ignorant that they are wearing out their body by the excitement of their brains. While alcoholic stimulants waste and destroy life, and prevent a happy old age, the same thing is also done by moral stimu-

lants. The latter is not as beastly, but it is just as wasteful of health. Whatever prematurely wears out the thinking machinery, or destroys health prematurely, carries bankruptcy into old age.

How much a man may do, therefore, depends upon the capital that God has given him. Many begin life with a small stock of health; they are to augment it. Many begin life, as do the children of rich men, with abundant capital and material; they are to guard it and take care of it. In either case, health, and the suitable conduct of the economy of the body, should be taught by every parent, and more and more by the pulpit.

Many men are struck down in the day of battle; they die nobly. Many men die before their prime, because the sins of their fathers are expiated in them; they perish as victims at a sacrifice. But there are a great many men that use their lives as you would use a candle—by putting three wicks, instead of one, in the same amount of wax, and then burning it out with a threefold flame. It is not long before the candle is burned to the socket. A true man should live all the way through his threescore years and ten, and then expire, not like a stenchful wick in an obscure socket. He should keep time like a clock, that goes on through the whole twenty-four hours, and until the very last beat: and when at last the weight touches the floor, there is no explosion; there is no disruption; the pointers are there; the dial still shows its fair face; every wheel is still in its place; the clock has simply run down, and silently, quietly, it stops. All the fair framework is left just as it was. Such should death in old age be—only that the soul ceases to keep time here, that it may begin to keep time where there is no running down, and where eternity shall be marked by hours of joy and minutes of pleasure forever and ever.

2. There ought, also, to be wisdom in secular affairs, in the preparation by the young for the coming of old age.

Foresight is a Christian virtue. There are many persons

who think that we are to depend upon Providence, and not upon foresight. There are some who even think that we ought not to insure ourselves, but that we ought, instead, to depend upon Providence. Are we, then, to depend upon Providence for next year's crop, and not sow the seed? Am I to depend upon Providence to hang umbrellas over my head whenever it rains, instead of building a roof to shelter me? Should you not rather say that he who makes a wise provision for future contingencies is acting in obedience to God's law? Every man should make such provision for himself as that he shall not be dependent upon others. Provision for moderate comfort in old age is wise. It is far better than an ambition for immoderate riches, which too often defeats itself. If men were more moderate in their expectations; if, when they had obtained a reasonable competency, they secured that from the perils of commercial reverses, more men, I think, would go into old age serene and happy.

But many men make money, not that they may enjoy it, but that they may enjoy the ambition of having more money than other people. They do not measure property by its relation to its use, but by its relation to their pride and to their ambition. The consequence is, that when the storm descends upon them many a gallant ship goes down. In nine cases out of ten, immoderation is the father of bankruptcy. It is the part of wisdom to secure, in youth and in manhood, a competency that shall keep old age from want. One of the conditions of true manliness is that a man shall not be dependent upon anybody but himself. I think it would be better that the father should not be dependent upon his children at any period of his life.

There is something beautiful, I know, in the thought of a parent leaning on the shoulders of those whom he has reared. Nevertheless, there is something more beautiful in the thought of a man leaning upon his own staff. In youth you are cutting the staff that you are to lean upon in old age. There is a reason, therefore, for frugality and moderation in expense,

that reaches as far out as your life is long, and that will seem to you more and more apparent as you grow older.

3. In looking upon old age, we are forcibly struck with the necessity of taking pains early, and all the way through life, to accumulate stores for social enjoyment. Sociability is a part of Christian duty. He that derives enjoyment from himself alone, that seeks to exclude himself from society, or to shut himself up with a class, or with a few families in a class, or with a few persons in a family, of his own age, taste, and pursuits, is leading a narrow, circumscribed life. If all your life long you derive pleasure from only one or two rounds; if you teach yourself to enjoy one or two things; if, of all that swarm around you in human life, you derive satisfaction only from the society of a chosen few; if you are happy only with those who reflect you in some way, how greatly will you feel the need of social pleasure in old age! A man ought to so train himself that there shall not be a human being about him out of whom he can not extract both profit and enjoyment. The tendency toward brotherhood, the holding of all men as though they were akin to you, the habit of deriving satisfaction from all classes of society, have relations not only to your usefulness and influence, but also to your old age. If a man, in old age, can go down to the great ocean of human society, and, casting his line there, bring to land every fish with a piece of money in its mouth, how happy is he! There are many old men who are happy at home; if they take the staff and walk into the street, all the children make them happy, and all the neighbors, men of low as well as of high degree, furnish them with pleasure. Every man should take great care not to cut himself off from the sympathies of human life. Old men should take care that they be not deprived of enjoyment in the society of the young; and if a man would derive comfort from the young in his old age, he must cultivate an attachment for the young in his early life. In youth and middle age you are to secure the provision that shall supply you in old age, if you are to be nourished and made happy on such joys as these.

Be not, then, selfish in your youth. You will be punished in old age if you are. Enlarge your social sympathies. Grow to your fellow-men, instead of growing away from them, and strive to live more and more in sympathy with them and for them.

4. Let me speak a few words of the intellectual resources that are to help you in old age.

Too often the intellect is merely considered as a tool. A man is too often educated merely with reference to gaining his living in the future. To such an extent is this idea prevalent, that if a man is to be a mechanic, or a farmer, and has pursued a liberal education, people sneer at him, and ask, "Why do you throw away so many precious years in educating a man who is not to be any thing, after all, but a mechanic or a laborer?" Or, if a man has gone through college, and has educated himself for a chemist, and then goes into a machine shop, people say, "Why, what a prostitution of time that was! He has gone through a whole curriculum of learning only to bury himself in a shop." Education has a more important relation to manhood than it has to the making of your outside fortune. If you are to be a lawyer, a physician, a minister, or a teacher, you need an education in order to succeed in your calling; but if you belong to none of these callings, you need an education to succeed in your manhood. Education means the development of what is in man; and every man ought to be developed, not because he can make money thereby, but because he can make *manhood* thereby. Education is due to your manhood. Every child should be educated, no matter what his business is to be. Of those who have not received a liberal professional education, there is not one young man in a million, in this country (where there is so much of work, and consequently so much of leisure), who has a fair start, that has not time enough, and means enough, and opportunities enough, to get a rational education. In that you are to have a refuge in old age. It is a piteous thing when a man becomes old, and can no longer plead at the bar, who has tak-

en all his excitement there through life; nor practice medicine, who has taken all his excitement in that through life; and, on being shut out from his usual employments, has nothing to do. He does not read books; he takes no more interest in them. He does not like newspapers; they do not concern him. Little by little the light of reason retreats, and he stands in old age like a light-house with the lamp gone out. Keep your lamp full of oil, and lay up such stores of intellectual provision, that, when you go into old age, if one resource fails you, you can try another. If you have learned to look under your feet every day while young, and to cull the treasures of truth which belong to geology, natural history, and chemistry; if every fly has furnished you a study; if the incrustation of the frost is a matter of interest; if the trees that come in spring, and the birds that populate them, the flowers of the meadow, the grass of the field, the fishes that disport themselves in the water—if all of these are to you so many souvenirs of the working hand of your God, you will find, when you come into old age, that you have great stores of enjoyment therein. Let me, therefore, recommend you to commit much to memory. When a man is blind, his memory is not blind. I have seen many a man who in youth had committed much to memory from the Scriptures, and hymns and poems, who was able, in old age, to recall and recite what he had learned, and to fall back upon those treasures, his own head having thus become to him a library. Oh, how much a man may store up against old age! What a price is put into the hands of the young wherewith to get wisdom! What provisions for old age do they squander and throw away! It is not merely that you may be keen and strong now; it is not for the poor ambition of being esteemed learned that I urge you now to lay such treasures up; but because it is just, and right, and noble that you should be intelligent, and because your whole life is interested in it, and your old age pre-eminently so.

There is many an old philosopher, like Franklin, whose last

hours are so serene, and sweet, and beautiful as to almost make one wish to exchange youth for old age. Man should stand in the horizon of life as sometimes, in summer, we see the sun stand, as if it had forgotten to move; lying so in vapor that it is shorn of its excessive brightness—large, round, red—looking as if it waited to cast back one more love-glance on the earth. So have I seen the aged linger; so round, and rich, and bright, and beautiful, as to make youth seem poor in treasure when compared with old age. It is a great thing so to have lived that the best part of life shall be its evening. October, the ripest month of the year, and the richest in colors, is a type of what old age should be.

5. I have reserved for the last the most important, namely, the spiritual, preparation for old age. It is a beautiful thing for a man, when he comes into old age, to have no more preparation to make. It is far better than nothing for a man who has gone through the hurry of life, who has tasted its disappointments, sounded its depths, and exhausted its resources, to spend his last years in preparing for the other life —that is far better than nothing; but a man's whole life should be a preparation for dying; and when a man comes into old age, he should have less preparation to make than at any other period of his life. Your thoughts should commence with heaven; your hopes should point you to those higher and nobler enjoyments that are in store; you should so live that when you come into old age you will not have to begin a new and untried way; you should not then have a piety that fits you like a boughten garment, not measured to your form. If piety is the garment you have worn through a long and virtuous life, you may stand in your old age in the certainty of faith, waiting only that you may pass from glory to glory.

A part of this spiritual preparation consists, I think, in living all the time with the distinct consciousness that our life is a joined one; that the best part of it is that which lies beyond; and that we are not to live for the life that lies between

one and eighty, but for that which lies between one and eternity. The habit of associating all your friends and friendships with this future life, while it will afford you great comfort and strength all the way through life, will give its choicest fruits and benefits in old age. As you grow old, childhood's companions die around you every year; but if you have been living a true Christian life, although the world may seem desolate for a time, yet your thought is this: "My companions, my fellow-workers, have gone before me; I am left alone in the dreary world, but am every day being brought closer and closer to that world of everlasting blessedness. One has gone before; another has gone; the wife of my bosom, my eldest child, one after another of my children, and of their children, have gone; one after another of my neighbors and the friends of my youth have gone, and I am left behind; but I am close upon their steps. They are all there waiting for me. I have but a few days to wait, and I shall be blessed again with their high and holy society."

How desolate must old age be to the man who has no heaven beyond; who stands trembling with infirmities, declined in ear, and eye, and tongue; his hand palsied, his memory gone—looking back across the dreary stretch of life that he has just passed over, and forward with fear to the life of which he thought so little! How glorious for an old man to stand, as Moses stood, upon the top of the mount, looking across the Jordan into the promised land, and viewing the fair possessions that awaited him! Moses died, and did not go over; but the old man shall die, and go over, and shall find it in that day a land rich, beautiful, and glorious.

If you would come into old age with these transcendent hopes, begin the work of preparation early. Live rightly all the way through. Do not think that if you live as you please now, you can live as you please then. Live now as you want to live in old age. Lay such walls on such foundations, and of such materials, as will support you; and then, when heart and flesh shall fail, it will only be because God thus

breaks open the tenement that he may let out the spirit, to enter into that high and serene existence where there shall be everlasting youth, and where everlasting blessedness awaits you.

At times, in preaching, a man's thoughts run upon bringing people into the kingdom; he has what are called revival thoughts and sympathies. I see men going blindly and heedlessly their own ways, and I am seized with an intense ardor and desire to bring them into a Christian life. At other times the minister thinks not so much of bringing men into the kingdom as of making more glorious those that are in. Do you not know that ten thousand veterans, well disciplined, are worth more than a hundred thousand scattering militia? The power is not in numbers, but in drill. Now, if all Brooklyn were brought within the Church, and the being "brought in" here did not mean much, Brooklyn would gain but little; but if the hundreds that are brought within the Church were thereby incited to a higher manhood, to better habits, to nobler aspirations, to a larger conception of life, to a serener age; if the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ stood conspicuous among men for their princeliness, for their innocent enjoyment of the world, for the power that they wield when they walk through dark and dangerous places; if they were victors where other men were defeated; if they stood upright where other men fell, through temptation; if they were radiant when other men were dark-browed; if they were full of God, full of hope, full of heaven, and these were the fruits of the Gospel among them, would it not be worth more to have a thousand such recruits than fifty thousand militia Christians? What we want is better men, more heroic men —men that shall illustrate what is possible by the application of the truths of Christ, and by the wise obedience of the laws of God and nature (for Christianity includes nature; it appropriates all that is in it, and gives it a higher direction)—men that are bottomed on nature and nourished on Christianity, as plants grow upon the earth and drink in life from the sun.

Men that are thus cultured are worth more than all the superficial effects of an exciting religion.

We want MANHOOD.

I should be proud to have it said that they that came into the Church here began straightway to make their profiting apparent in their higher manhood, in their dignity of character, in their fruitfulness, and in the sweetness of their lives.

God grant, my dear young friends, that for the life which is opening before you, you may have instructions that we who are older had not, and be inspired by an ambition that was scarcely possible with us.

I do not want to live my life over again, but I rejoice that you are entering upon a more glorious career than I could have done. Use your opportunities; do not waste them. God has given you privileges such as were never revealed to any generation before; be, then, noble men; be kingly men; show to your own generation what is the power of true religion and of true Christianity in you.

I speak unto you, young men, because you are strong. I speak unto you, maidens, because you are wise and virtuous. I call you to faith in Christ as the inspiration, as the beginning only. I call you to womanhood and to manhood.

Dear brethren, we are the sons of God; we can not afford to be lost. We are the sons of God; we can not afford to be unhappy. We are the sons of God; we can not afford to keep bad company. We are the sons of God; we can not afford to be tied down by appetite, or with considerations of what we shall eat, or drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed. We are the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

PRAYER.

Thee we adore, thou holy, sacred, infinite, everlasting God! In thine ineffable light we can not stand. We, whose natures are impure, could not bear the weight of the revelation of eternal glory. But near to thee are principalities and powers,

and near to thee are saints inured to heaven, and tempered to all its brightness. The great congregation of the ages past to-day hymns thy praise. Around about thee are those with whom, in sweet and blessed fellowship, thou hast walked for centuries. Thou hast taken fear from them, and sorrow has not known them for many a rolling year. Thou hast released them from the strife of mortal life. The bitterness of death, the grief of trouble, the sting of sin, and the peril of the law, are past. Into thy blessed fellowship have risen many from out of our households, from our sides in the church, and from about us in the midst of the community, and the voices that brought cheer and affection to us are now lifting themselves up in sacred songs in thy presence. Who can enter in, by thought or imagination, to conceive of the royalty of that realm of delight where thou standest as Host and eternal Entertainer, and where all about thee are thy guests —kings and priests unto God? We rejoice that it is higher than our thoughts. We gather together the things that men call most delightsome; we select from the sympathies of the world, and from our experiences, the chiefest things; and yet we hear thee saying, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Not when we have come to the utmost bound of reason, to the extreme verge of the imagination, is it possible for us to conceive what God hath laid up for them that serve him. We are willing to wait. We do not seek to know beyond our time, or before it. We accept now the journey, and then we will accept our Father's house when we shall have reached it. But we thank thee that there are these fore-gleams and tokens by the way to cheer us, and to lift us out of despondency. We have the certainty of God's great goodness. Gracious art thou beyond our power to think. Thy thoughts are higher than our thoughts—as much higher as the heavens are than the earth. We can not enter into the conception of the grandeur of thy justice, and of that sense of truth and right which is in thee. And who shall measure what infinite love is? Who shall undertake to imagine what the wonder of the evolution of thy loving is in thy family? If we that are but just begun, and have not learned the royalties of love, know how to fill our homes with sweet and rare delight; if we look back to our childhood, and to our parents, and wonder at the wealth of affection in poor, imperfect, sinful mortals, the creatures of a day, what must thy divine love be, thou that dwellest in eternity and from eternity, and hast had all the experience of ages? It is higher than we can reach. The length and the breadth, the height and the depth

of it, pass understanding. But we rejoice to believe that thou art what thou art. So do we interpret thee, that our hearts are traveling home full of hope. The intimations that thou givest us; the yearnings that we feel; the aspirations that we have, and the unsatisfying nature of the world—are not these the witnesses of thy Spirit in us? When our souls go out after thee, is it not because we have tokens of sonship? In our spontaneous outcry for Father, do we not recognize our relationship to thee? And sometimes, when we are lifted up by secret and divine joys above the power of the world—yea, and above the power of our own hearts to do us harm; when we walk in the high places of the earth so that nothing can reach up to pluck us down or hinder our grand career, then have we not in us some intimations of that noble and royal existence which thou wilt grant to us when life, and its burdens, its trials, and its discipline are over? Grant, we pray thee, not that we may seek to abide on the mountain-top in indolence and in luxury of spiritual enjoyment, but that, taking these for the confirmation of our faith, and for the strengthening of our hands, we may press right forward in the way of duty, returning to life to bear sorrow, and trouble, and care, and vexation, and hinderance. Why should we seek to be uncrowned with thorns, who are the followers of Him that was crowned for us? And why should we think that the servant is better than the master, so that he should go free while the master suffers? May we be willing to wear the signs and badges of our discipleship. Every day may we go with trouble and care to Him who says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." So, bearing our burdens, may we lose them; so, enduring our troubles, may we cease to feel them to be troubles. Thus may we go through the period of our earthly probation. And at last, when thou shalt have served our generation by our poor and perishable services, then may we know as we are known, and behold thee without a glass, face to face.

Grant, to-day, we beseech thee, to every one in thy presence, the special grace that his case needs. Some are children of tears. O thou that causest the clouds to send down rain, that art now searching out all the roots, and that by storms art preparing for leaves and blossoms, grant that those who sit in tears may feel that God is raining upon them, that their hearts may become the gardens of the Lord; and grant, we pray thee, that though for the present their sufferings are not joyous, but grievous, afterward they may work out in them the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

And we beseech thee that thou wilt raise up for those that are alone, and that feel their desolateness, the shadowy and sacred companionship of thine own presence, that they may know that they walk with God, and that even in the furnace the form of the fourth is walking near, so that the fire shall not harm them.

Are any in the midst of temptations grievously tempted? Thou that didst stop the mouths of lions, and delivered thy servant from their power, canst thou not deliver such? Succor them, that they may know that God hath not forgotten them.

If there are any that are seeking to know thee, and that, like Mary of old, for the multitude of their tears and sorrows are not able to discern the Christ that stands before them, grant, we pray thee, that they may hear thee, as she heard thee, calling them by their name; and with joyful alacrity may they reach out their hands and cry, "My Lord and my God!" Teach those that seek thee by some tangible sign to worship thee as a Spirit. Teach those that ask manifestations of God in the tumult and mutations of an earthly experience to love and worship by faith.

If any are walking with but early and feeble steps in the right way, O thou that didst draw near to the little children, and caress them, and take them to thy bosom, and lay thy hand upon their head, and bless them with words of love and sympathy, grant that the young that are beginning to follow Christ may have the laying on of thy hand and the inbreathing of thy blessing.

Grant that parents may be more and more encouraged to rear their children from the very cradle to truth, to righteousness, to purity, to duty, to faith, to hope, to love, to obedience toward God. And so we beseech thee that this church may include in it those better churches of the Christian household, where the father and the mother are ordained of God to be priests to the little children that in faith follow them, and in following them follow God. We pray that thou wilt bless the efforts that are being made to instruct those whose parents do not instruct them—for some there are that love their children for this world, but love them not for the world to come; and we pray that thou wilt grant that there may be provided for the children of Godless parents Christian culture.

Those that go forth to labor among the poor; that visit from house to house, and seek out the afflicted; that go day by day into the streets, into jails and prisons, into all places

where men resort—O Lord, grant that they may be clothed with thy Spirit, and that they may bear the sweet and blessed tidings of the Gospel to those that need them so much even in this life; and we pray thee that they may have a thousand fold the blessings which they confer bestowed upon their own hearts.

We beseech thee that thou wilt bless all for whom our prayers should ascend. Bless our enemies, if we have them. Grant that as thou dost forgive us, we may forgive them.

Grant a blessing to rest upon all the churches of our land. Revive thy work in them. Prepare thy servants to preach the Gospel with more power; and may it be, in their hands, a means of bringing many to righteousness. As the clouds pour down rains upon the earth, so may revivals pour down the divine influence upon this nation, that it may be cleansed from its sins, and be prepared for that great career which thou art opening for it. Give liberty to all for whom thou hast died; and may those that call themselves by the name of Christ no longer tread under foot thy creatures. May men here, and all the world over, have their rights. May the great truths of God in the Gospel go forth with more and more power unto every part of the earth.

Wilt thou hear us in these our petitions, not because we are worthy, but because thou, O Jesus, art worthy; and to thy name, to the Father, and to the Spirit, shall be all the praise evermore. Amen.

XVI.

The Teaching of Events.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, January 19th, 1868.

The Teaching of Events.

"And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."—Acts, xxi., 14.

There is many a fern that has laid its cheek to the clay and died; the most insignificant event, apparently, conceivable; and yet, after thousands and thousands of years, comes the geologist, and when the miner has laid bare the plant's figure stamped upon the stone, he reads in it a history of ages long ago. It is just the fact, it may be, needed to establish certain great theories; and this poor vegetable, unnoticed when alive, and not heeded when dead, finds itself, after many ages, summoned as a witness into the sunshine, to testify to men in what steps and in what order God built the world. So many an event recorded in Scripture, that had little significance in the time of its happening, becomes very important in later ages.

Such an event was this in the experience of Paul. He was on his way toward Jerusalem; he had reached Cæsarea, where there came to him the prophet Agabus. After the manner of those strange Oriental teachers, who taught largely by symbols and figures, he took Paul's girdle, and went through the form of making himself a captive, binding his own hands and feet, and saying, "Thus shall it befall, in Jerusalem, the man that owns this girdle." The company, and Paul himself, apparently, believed this man to be a prophet. They showed that they regarded the prediction as true in that it aroused them up to such earnestness and importunity. If you ask me why (if they regarded him as a

prophet of the Lord, and his prediction as an event that must inevitably occur) they did not sit down with Oriental stoicism, and say, "If this is to happen, it will happen, and there is no use to resist it," I answer that they were wiser; they knew that it was lawful to fight the decree as long as they could. They all began to persuade the apostle not to go to Jerusalem. How vehemently they did it, and with what tender importunity, is shown in Paul's answer: "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?" It seems that the importunity was such that it carried home to him the question, which also presents itself to us, Is it lawful to strive against things which are to be done? Certainly it is. It is always lawful to strive against events. Apparent evils, although they may seem to us as inevitable, are to be resisted; and it is perfectly lawful to resist them with all our power in all lawful ways, no matter how certainly they may seem to be descending upon us. These men took the natural and direct method to resist the fulfillment of the prediction. If Jerusalem will imprison Paul, they reasoned, then should Paul keep away from Jerusalem, and it will not imprison him. Paul, instead of being moved by their importunity to stay away from Jerusalem, seemed to have been kindled to go; for, although he and they were looking at the same facts, they were looking at them from different points of vision. They were thinking of his safety, and of their joy in him; Paul was thinking of preaching Christ's name; of being a witness for Christ's truth. He was not thinking about his own safety at all, but about the safety and honor of the message he bore. Thus, when they feared that he might be made a suffering witness, they besought him, with all the fervor of true affection, not to go; when he thought that going to Jerusalem would cause him to be seized, held captive, and made to suffer for the name of Christ, that prospect of suffering, as we see from his noble declaration in favor of Christ, rather kindled him to go than to stay. The same event, foreseen, stimulated Paul and discouraged them. They had done all that

they could to persuade him; but when Paul said, as nobly he did, "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" when they saw that they could not prevail with him, and that he would not be persuaded, then, with the utmost resignation they could command, they ceased importuning and said, "The will of the Lord be done." Why did they not say so at first? When Agabus told them that he was a prophet, and predicted that Paul would go to Jerusalem, and there be made a captive, why did they not then instantly say, "The will of the Lord be done?" They were importunate, they were zealous in their endeavor to ward off this coming event, and so to prove Agabus a false or a mistaken prophet. But when they found that their utmost endeavor to change his course failed, then they said, "The will of the Lord be done."

They acted just right, just as every body ought to act. Whatever is good, try with your best power to have, and then, if you can not get it, say, "The will of the Lord be done." Whatever is bad in your external condition, or to be dreaded in body or in mind; whatever evil impends or threatens, resist it valiantly with all your power and wisdom; and whenever you find that resistance avails you nothing, then consider that it is a revelation, and accept it as such. Events reveal the divine will; but you are not to believe them until you have put them to proof. When you have questioned them (events are the only things you have a right to put on the rack), and opposed them with human will and wisdom, and they still bear the same witness, then it is time for you to give up, and to say, "I know this is a revelation of God's will through events; and the will of the Lord be done."

In our Lord's Prayer is the phrase, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." It there seems to be generic; to respect the spirit of nations, laws, customs, and policies; it seems to be a prayer that the spirit of Christ may pervade

the whole kingdom of the world. In our text we see a personal use of this generic spirit; it is the heart saying in regard to the individual life, "Thy will be done."

And you may earnestly desire the will of God in the sense in which it is breathed in the Lord's Prayer, and yet not desire the will of the Lord in the sense of this personal relation to him. You may desire God's will to prevail in the matter of national justice, in the purification of the morals of society, in the civilization and elevation of men to better conditions, in the increase of refinement and knowledge, in the general improvement of human life and happiness; and yet, with all this aspiration for God's will, sincere and genuine though it be, you may be quite unwilling that the will of God should prevail in your own personal affairs—where it humbles your pride, for instance; where it disappoints your ambition; where it opposes your selfishness; where it wounds your affections; where it resists your schemes, and overwhelms you with embarrassments.

It is this view of the submission of our hearts to God's will, in the affairs that respect our individual history, that I shall further speak of this morning. You have often heard the will of God discussed as it respects the whole world; let me discuss the will of God as it is revealed in events, in its relation to your individual and personal affairs.

I. I remark that God reveals his will by his providence, and through his administration of events. We are apt to lose sight of this in that other revelation; and there is sometimes an unwise jealousy lest God's recorded revelation should lose something of importance in our eyes if we teach that there is also a revelation of the will of God in nature and in the events of his providence.

God's will has been revealed in regard to great moral truths, and in regard to human conduct and human character. In his word, and also in human experience, he develops the laws of experience, and these laws of experience are just as much natural laws as are the laws of digestion or of health.

Whatever has been found out in this world by the study of the human mind, and by the study of the moral constitution of man, is as much a natural law as are the laws of heat, of light, or of the attraction of gravitation. Men speak as if natural laws were those that respected the body or matter; but the most important of natural laws are those which touch the soul. From the beginning there have been unfoldings of certain laws of inward experience. These are revelations of God's creative skill, and in their higher ranges, and under certain conditions, have been regarded in the world as authoritative revelations. There are many revelations that are not authoritative, but still are revelations. They do not come to us with a "thus saith the Lord." The Bible does; and yet we are not to exclude all other revelations which lie outside of this, such as revelations in regard to great truths and principles, revelations with regard to character, conduct, and government.

In the light of such general principles men undertake to organize their lives; they undertake to build up fortunes by industry, skill, and application; to establish the conditions of a happy family and household; to build a character for themselves which shall have in it the elements of trust, beauty, and power; they organize, in short, by the light and help of the revelation of great moral truths, a well-ordered Christian life.

Now is there any such thing as making known to a man the will of God in the crowd of diverse events through which every man must make his way in this attempt to organize his life? We know that justice is supreme, that truth is to be honored, that purity is to be untarnished, that God is to be supremely obeyed and loved. We know that we are to love our fellow-men. All these truths we acknowledge; but they do not determine the question whether I am to be rich or poor. They do not tell me whether I am to be a poet or a philosopher. They do not decide the questions of every-day life upon which men are to be disciplined—the raising of money; the avoiding of dangers; the repairing of mischiefs. Is there

any revelation that touches these questions about which all men are properly interested? The general course I know; I am always to follow the leadings of moral truths; but how about this conflict of events? How about the arrangement of this misunderstanding? How about that debt that I did not incur, but which, by my social connections, has been rolled upon me and threatens to crush me? How about my children, that I can not make to walk entirely in the way in which I have walked? How about all those for whom I carry sympathy, and for whose welfare I am to a certain degree responsible? How about all the various lines of individual activity which men pursue, in the store, in the shop, on the land, and on the sea; contesting here, resisting there; rising or falling in the crowd of transient experiences—in regard to these, is there any way in which men may know the will of God in events? In modes of action we know his will; is there any such thing as knowing the will of the Lord in respect to special acts?

I reply that we have no such knowledge of events as we have of principles. A man reads a declaration of principles, and comes into possession of them. Their meaning is intelligible. The application of them may be obscure; but, having once come into the possession of principles, we know what is the will of God about them for evermore. There is no such revelation of the divine will in respect to events. We have to gather it gradually from a study of the indications of his Providence. But through such study it is revealed to us; for God reveals himself to us through events just as much as of old he did through prophets and holy men. Many men ask, "Why did God not make practical duty just as plain as he did theoretical truth? Why should we be left to find out with pain and uncertainty, day by day, what way in life is best for us?" A man says within himself, "I am an honest man; I desire to do right, if I only knew how, but I am perplexed. Why should I be thus perplexed when I want to know what is the proper way and am willing to do it?

Why should I be left to find it out as best I can?" Because men are to work out for themselves the power of thought, of discrimination, of judgment, by which they shall themselves be able to discern and determine their own ways. We are not forever to be children. We tell our children that when they grow up to be men they are to be able to discern for themselves. The hen cares for and feeds her chickens until they get to a certain degree of growth, and then she drives them off, and they must hunt their own food. There comes a time when even birds and chickens have to be independent; and it is not a part of the economy of this world to treat men all the way through life as if they were children. The very principle upon which human affairs are conducted is to bring men by diverse influences of joy and sorrow up to that habit of thought, and judgment, and discrimination that shall make them able to judge for themselves of events, and determine for themselves what is the right and the wrong course. I know it would be a great deal easier to be told; it would be a great deal easier if men were like several cars attached to the locomotive of divine Providence, and the locomotive should go whirling them on their way; but, in the economy of the universe, men are meant to convey themselves; to do their own thinking; to form their own judgments, and to form correct ones. They are at school in this world for that very purpose. The whole economy of God is against laziness, and in favor of intense, responsible activity. The whole moral scheme of this world is one that puts upon man the duty of learning—in judgment, in taste, in moral sentiment. It is an economy which is driving men up to that divine manhood, in which, although with less sympathy and beauty, yet after the same manner, they shall stand, every man in his own place, as God stands in his place—perfectly luminous, perfectly certain, perfectly sure. We shall be partakers of the divine nature; and this nature is being hammered out of us, or into us, by the conflict of events.

II.—Z

It would be a great deal easier, certainly, for honest men to have all their judgments formed for them, and every day to find, written and laid on their desks, a schedule of just what is right and wrong for the day following. But there is no such an economy—there is not to be any such an economy. Men are not only bound to do what is right, but they are obliged to find out what that right is; and I think the most perplexing part of the experience of human life, with an honest heart, is to know what is right. It is not doing duty, but finding out what duty is, that perplexes. It is not difficult to find out the will of God in regard to principles, as I have said, but it is difficult to find out the will of God in respect to the daily events of life—the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, the prosperous and the unfortunate.

The great truth remains, then, that the events of life contain in them the letters of God's will to individuals. They are a revelation of the divine will to men, if they have learned to read that revelation. As a man may receive a letter, telling him that he has bequeathed to him a large property in England, and, being unable to read, may carry that letter in his pocket a year without a single experience of joy, because he does not know what is in it, so a man may have a message of events from God every day, and yet be quite unaffected by it, because he does not know how to read this mode of divine revelation.

II. This peculiarity, then, is to be noticed in regard to the interpretation of the will of God as made known to us in events—namely, we are to test those events by the full and patient activity of all our powers; and it is by thus trusting them that we learn whether they are or are not revelations from God. To secure those experiences which all men regard as good, to avert those which seem to us evil, we are not only permitted, but we are commanded thus to test events. It is our duty to seek health; it is our duty to avoid accident to the body. No man should willingly give up his right hand or his right eye. No man should willingly give up any thing

that, according to the experience of the world, is esteemed good. If there come an accumulation of events that indicate apparently that it is the will of God that a man that is rich should become poor, avoid it; don't give up. If a man stands on the vantage-ground, and there come to him some event saying, "It is the will of God that you should vacate your fine house," say to that event, "Prophet, stand by until I try you and prove you; not if I can resist it will I give up this house." That is right. Avoid the evil. If a man is surrounded by friends and friendships, and there comes the mystic intimation of God's will in events, and the destroying angel spreads abroad his pinions over the community, and the evil draws nearer and nearer to him, and death speaks, now from one side and now from another, and he looks upon his own circle and sees that here is one susceptible, and there is one feeble, and it seems as if every thing was indicating that God meant to break in upon the unity of his family, and take one away by death—what then? Let no man say to me that it is the will of God that my children should die, or that my companion should be taken. I don't believe a word of it until I can't help it. Fight bravely against sickness and death.

When Agabus said to the apostle and his friends, "This man shall go up to Jerusalem, and the Jews shall bind him," every one turned to Paul and said, "If God says by his prophet that you are to be made captive at Jerusalem, don't go; thus we shall defeat the divine decree." They were right in saying so—that is to say, they were right in testing events to see whether or not they were revelations of what they appeared to be.

Revelations are not always known, any more than nuts are, by the way they look on the tree. Who, on first looking at a chestnut bur, ever thought of what it hid; yet the boys will tell you that if you give it a little frost the bur will open, and show the inside to be a great deal better than the outside. Events are often much better inside than they are

outside. No man knows their meaning till their message is fully uttered. After you have exhausted your wisdom, and your courage, and your patience; after you have invited things desirable and repelled things repulsive, if still the evil comes or the good lingers, then to the final testimony of events which have been thus put to the test you are to yield, and cry, as they did, "The will of the Lord be done."

My darling child lies sick—my only daughter; and am I, as a minister of God and an exemplar to men, in submission to the will of my Master, to say that this sickness is unto death? Because the physician says she will not recover, and the nurse says she can not recover, and my own fears say she may not recover, am I to say "It is the will of the Lord she should die; the will of the Lord be done?" No! I will fight death to the last; and when I have made good battle with all the love, and wisdom, and patience, and fidelity I possess, and the shadow has fallen, and I am defeated, then I accept the event; it is proved a true prophet at last; but I would not believe it until I had tested it. Then I say, "It was the will of the Lord she should die; the will of the Lord be done." Not when the revelation first comes do I accept it as an expression of the will of God, but when it has done its last work—*that* is the revelation. Facts threatening are not revelations; facts accomplished are.

This mingling, then, of the human element; this discriminating; this wrestling with events; this putting your whole self into the conflict—this is that method by which we learn to read the lesson of events. We learn to read other kinds of literature in other ways, but we are to learn to read the literature of events as being providential revelations of God's will, and we are to learn it in that way.

III. The power to read the will of God, then, lies largely in our dispositions. There are a great many persons who submit themselves upon the first display of force, and suppose that their yielding is *piety*. Remember that no submissiveness to the divine will is valued until it follows man-

ly endeavor. High action is the father of true resignation. I do not believe in that submission to God's will which comes from cowardice, from discouragement, from too easy a disposition—*laziness* you may call it. I don't believe that, as soon as you see evil threatening, you should say, "I see the finger of Providence," and give right up. When our Savior went with the apostles to Emmaus, he made as though he would go further; but they entreated him to abide with them, and he then turned aside and spent the hours with them there. So God's providence often looks as though it would go on; if you don't want it to go on, stop it. Don't you know that love oftentimes says "No," in order that it may be made to say "Yes?" In the dealing of God with you through the events of life, beware lest you submit too easily; beware that you are not too forward with resignation; beware that you do not give up your will too soon. It is a great thing to give up one's will, when it *must* be given up, nobly and thoroughly, but it is a great thing not to give it up until you are really compelled to do it. Do you suppose that God put in you the power of discrimination for nothing? Do you suppose that God gave you your ambition for nothing? When the will of God is revealed in facts accomplished, then submit; but do not submit too quickly. Do not lay down your arms before you are compelled, lest you find out afterward that you surrendered when God was ready to give you victory.

There is a great deal of what is called "submitting to the will of God" that is the poorest kind of piety. Do not think that because you are thirty-five years old, and all your endeavors thus far have failed, and it seems to be the will of God that you should be a useless man, that you will submit, and seek to spend the rest of your life in some quiet seclusion. Oh, you lazy one! Do you suppose that God is proud of such submission and of such children as that? He tingles you with events, not to make you give up, but to make you wake up. What! stand where you are at thirty-five, forty,

or at forty-five, because it seems to you that the indications of divine Providence are that you have not fulfilled your destiny? Do you say that you are fifty years old, and that therefore you ought to give up? You are at an age when a ripe experience ought to make you all the more successful. What! you give up? and, above all, give up on a coward's plea—that the will of God, revealed in circumstances, requires it? It is not the will of God revealed in circumstances. Whatever thing, therefore, is right; whatever thing is good; whatever thing is just; whatever thing is desirable for you, still seek it; and if old ways fail you, try new ways. Be you young until you die, so far as energy, persistence, ambition, and augmentation of resources are concerned. There are some things that curl over easily in the autumn. Their leaves become sear and yellow, and fall to the ground before there are any signs of frost in the air. I do not like such vegetables; I do not have them in my garden. Others carry their green leaves clean down into freezing before they give up. These I like. And I like to see men that can look at God's frosts and not be blighted, but remain green, and succulent, and growing, even into the edges of winter.

But when the event has happened, then, on the other hand, remember that no energy is blest, no enterprise is divine, which does not carry in it, latent, the spirit of resignation and submission. In the day of battle, fight as though you were a lion. In the day of defeat, yield. Persevere in your endeavor to the very last; but the moment the event has transpired which settles the question, accept the will of God, and yield to it.

I do not blame you, when your child is sick, that you resist the ill omen; but remember the prophet of old, the sweet singer of Israel, who, when told that his child was sick, would not eat, but girded himself with sackcloth, and lay all night upon the ground. When the child died, his servants whispered among themselves and feared to tell him, and said, "While the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he

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would not hearken unto our voice; how will he then vex himself if we tell him that the child is dead?" When David saw them whispering among themselves, he said, "Is the child dead?" And he arose, and washed himself, and changed his apparel, and went rejoicing into the house of God, and praised his name. His servants were all amazed, and inquired of him, "Why is this? while the child was yet alive, you lay upon the ground fasting and weeping; but, now that the child is dead, you rise and eat bread?" "Because," said the old wise king, "while the child was yet alive I fasted and wept, for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live? But, now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." And he praised God. How beautiful is his example! How his soul went out in acquiescence to the will of God. It was the will of God; he knew it; and he resigned himself to it.

Oftentimes God knows that the snatching of a child is the sorest affliction that he can bring upon us; but to some men other trials are yet more severe. Many a man has suffered more from bankruptcy than he would from bereavements. But, in whatever way events make known the will of God to you, and wherever you are, remember, do not give up until you are compelled to; but when you do give up, do it thoroughly; do it sweetly; do it beautifully. This is one of the most difficult things in the world.

It is said that on the battle-field some die in rage, and lie with clenched fists, with passion apparent in their face. Others, that in the conflict carried themselves with magnificent powers, in death lie with smiles upon their faces, as if they had died dreaming sweet dreams of home, even amid the horror of the battle around them. That is beautiful. When you die in the conflict of life, don't die gnarled and strife-marked, but with the look of resignation in your face. If you are overthrown, you then know what God's will is; don't give up before, but give up then, and do it like a *man*.

A great many men know how to be poor who would be ruined if God should pull them up into sudden prosperity. Other men have been prosperous all their life long, and are very beautiful, and sweet, and companionable, and lovable as long as they are prosperous; but reverse the experience, and they are the reverse. They do not know how to be poor. They never before had such a trial. A true manhood gives one strength, not only in prosperity, but in adversity. It makes a man proof against blandishments on the one side, and against prosperity on the other; against persecution and against flattery.

With this general interpretation of the doctrine of the revelation of events, let me close with a few points of personal and practical application.

There is no such thing as interpreting the will of God unless we have in us the spirit of children. What is the spirit of children? Love—confidence. If a man comes to the interpretation of adverse or of fortunate events in the spirit of pride, he will never know their meaning. God locks up his best blessings, but gives to every man a key wherewith to open the lock. One man takes his key, and goes up to the lock, and tries to unlock it; but his key will not fit; it will not go in, because it is *Pride* that he has been trying to unlock with. Another man says, "Let me try my key." He takes *Vanity;* but he finds that vanity will not unlock the door of divine Providence and reveal the secrets that are within. Another man comes up with the key of willful *Selfishness.* His key is three times as big as the keyhole, and he can't get in. They all fail to unlock the door and go away. By-and-by another man comes. He puts his key to the lock; it slides in; there is not a ward that it does not touch; the bolt slides back without a sound, and the door swings open. He knows the secret. He comes in the spirit of love, obedience, and resignation, and to him God's will is revealed. Pride could not open the door; Vanity could not open it; Selfishness could not open it; Love could.

"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." There is no man so big a fool as he that thinks that he knows every thing, and that nobody can teach him. But if a man has the spirit of filial love; if he says, "My Father knows me, and knows all my circumstances. I love him, and his will is my will;" and if, when events come, he will look at them with a child-like, loving spirit, to him will be given to interpret the revelation of God's will in events. Love is better than philosophy. The intuitions of love are the best guides that are offered to us in this life.

Remember, then, if you would know how to read your Father's manuscript, written every day in the letters of events, you must have the spirit of filial love.

In the truth we have been considering, there is great cause of renewed hope and courage to the downcast. There is many a brave heart born into life under the most unfavorable circumstances. Here is a young man that feels, "My parents were poor, my opportunities are few, but I have in me the spirit of a man. I can not bear to be a drudge. I fain would become educated, and rise above my present circumstances, but I have no property, no patrons, no friends. There is the academy, but I can not subsist there. There is the college, but I may not walk through its shady groves; yet, of all things on earth, I desire to be educated." Why, then, do you not become educated? How much you desire it will be shown by your conduct. If you desire it more than ease, more than food, more than raiment, more than comforts, more than fellowships, more than society; if you desire it more than any other thing on earth, the probability is that with that spirit you will get it. But when a man has this sacred thirst for knowledge awakened within him, and then, although all the indications of Providence seem against him, works persistently with head, and heart, and hand, giving up every thing else to accomplish what he so much desires—what does he get? Familiarity with literature; a knowl-

edge of Greek and Latin; familiarity with the classics; a knowledge of the sciences—but is that all? That is but the merest sugaring of the loaf: he has got the habit of *succeeding;* the habit of self-sacrificing; the habit of victorious culture.

If, therefore, there be any here that want an education, but are poor, and whose parents are poor, I say to you that I do not know whether you can get it or not. If you are self-indulgent, you can not. If you look at an education as a child looks at a custard upon a shelf, who cries because he can not get up to it, you can not get it; and it is probable that you are not worth it. Why should such men be educated? We have educated fools enough already! Why not stay where you are useful? You have no right to be more than you are if you can not master your circumstances; if you can not work your way upward by the potency and invincibleness of your will. Do you dare to look events in the face and defy them? Do you dare to go up through all opposition to victory, and, having done all, to stand? Then you need not ask for patronage; you will get an education. But if you can not work your way up, what are you crying for? Why don't you turn to things that you are fitted for? God means to make *men* in this world. All the rest are rubbish. They are as the chips where the house is built. *Men* are timbers, and are being built up into God's house.

There are persons who are seeking the way of life, but are surrounded, without their consent and apparently without their instrumentality, with such tribulations that they hardly know what to think or do; men that have made mistakes in their social connections; men who are all the time thrown into circumstances that aggravate their dispositions; men that find themselves so blocked up on every side, that, after bearing it for years and years, they say to themselves, although youth is still on them, that they were born to ill luck and sorrow; that there is no use in their trying; that they have buffeted opposition as long as they can, and would God

that they might die; and at last say, in their despair, "If God will not help me, I will kill myself." In general, suicides are insane men. If they are not, in a great majority of instances, it does not make much difference whether they live or die. They have no courage, no stamina, no true manhood. What! You are surrounded with trouble; you are surrounded with difficulties; you are mortified and disappointed every day, and know not that it is the voice of God to you?

What would you have thought if a recruit, on being sent down to the Army of the Potomac, had cried the first day because he could not get any plum-pudding; and on the second day because his clothes were torn, and he had no one to sew them up; and on the third day because he had to march farther than he wanted to? They take such weaknesses out of boys pretty quickly in the army.

There are men in God's army suffering what all soldiers suffer, deprivation and hardship on every side; the missiles of the enemy come hurling in, asking no leave (for bomb-shells and shot do not stand on ceremony). But by life's battle there is being wrought out in them a nobler manhood, an enfranchised will, a purified courage, a sweeter resignation, an invisible trust in God, and thus they are being prepared to rise superior to their circumstances, and to evince a divinely-kindled manhood. Be not, then, easily discouraged by opposition, nor sit down ignominiously and cry because the way is not made smooth before you. It is this opposition which tests your manhood and which makes it.

Is there any thing nobler than a true manhood? any thing toward which we should more seek to inspire our children? Is there any thing more sad than a human form walking through an aimless life, discouraged at every buffeting, and turned aside by every obstacle? O that the dead would go to the grave-yard! O that the dead would bury their dead! While you live, in God's name LIVE! Do not succumb to circumstances, nor count yourself unworthy of suffering with Christ, that the divine nature may be developed in you. If

the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, shall we, the soldiers, endure less? Are we better than our Lord?

Human life must be measured by new standards. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first; great things are little, and little things are great, when you look at them in the light of God's truth. All life is full of profound meaning and of deep importance. The most trivial events; the dealings of God with you, morning, noon, and night, when you look at them with the eye of faith, of love, of filial submission to the will of God, assume a vast importance, and human life is transformed into a very different thing from what it seems to be to the worldly-minded man.

God did not put us into this world for nothing. Its joys, its sorrows, its cares, its burdens, and its toils all have a place in the divine purpose. For you and me Christ died—to develop his own manhood in you and me. He saves you by working out the divine nature in us.

This world is a glorious workshop for making MEN. The fire is hot enough to make you a white heat, and the anvil is broad enough to turn you into such shapes as God wants.

Be ye MEN, therefore, and count nothing of experience amiss, whether it be of joy or of sorrow, remembering that all things work together for the good of those that love the Lord.

Love him, and so be victorious over life; and he that conquers life shall find death itself conquered, and himself a victor before God and his angels.

XVII.

Christian Character.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, December 29th, 1867.

Christian Character.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." —John, i., 12, 13.

The sons of the king are royal, and they stand at the head of the most favored class in society. To be admitted into sonship with God implies at once (certainly to those to whom this word first came) admission to eminence—to pre-eminence. They were not born to it; they were born again to it. It did not come, in other words, by natural causation.

The Hebrew language did not abound in—it scarcely possessed—generic philosophical terms; and in expressing what would be called a philosophical truth in our modern terms, it always employed a sort of paraphrase. Instead of saying "God is every where," the Hebrew would say, "He is in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth," and thus, by a series of specifications, produce the impression in the mind which we produce by a single specific term. We should say, Natural causes will not produce in a man the sonship which makes him a child of God. The apostle states that the sons of God "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," which is only a circuitous way of stating that which we ordinarily should say in much fewer words: Natural causes never produce Christian manhood.

In so far as individual men are concerned, religion aims first and mainly at the production of character. Although Christianity has respect to the outward life, to society, to the

most minute acts, it is only as results, not as the primal end. It seeks to produce a state of mind of great purity and power, and from that state it derives the influences which shall control all the details of human life. Christianity seeks to produce a certain inward condition; we call it character. It assumes, then, that with that force established within, the exterior fruits, the moralities, and the characteristics of life will follow naturally. The main thing is to secure the generic force. At first it seeks to produce a character resulting from the predominant influence of the moral sentiments rather than of the ordinary secular forces of the human mind. Christianity assumes that all the lower range of human powers have their appropriate stimuli in the natural organization of the globe. It not only assumes, but asserts, that the highest part of man is beyond the reach of the ordinary influences of the world. It builds its throne higher than the flesh, higher than the appetites and passions, higher than common domestic affections, higher than taste or reason itself. It enthrones itself in the moral sentiments. It seeks to frame and fashion not merely an ideal, but a potential character. It seeks to give vitality and force to the higher part of man's nature—such a vitality as that it shall rule and dominate over every other part. By nature a man's lowest faculties are strongest. He is first the animal, then the emotive creature, and then he begins to be a reasoning creature. Last in the order of time, and least in the order of power, is man strong in his moral nature. Therefore, when it is attempted by the power of revelation, by the system of Christianity, to establish man in his right estate, and give him his right proportions and power, the aim is, first, to produce Christian character, which consists in the prominence of the higher sentiments in man's nature over all the lower ones. Every body believes that there are spiritual elements; that they are very becoming; that religion, of course, develops them, and that they are to be a part of our experience; but that is not the true idea. Religion is not a luxury; it is a necessity. It is

not incidental; it is primary. It is to be the controlling force; the chief sentiment in man's nature, by which, more than by any thing else, he is to be governed.

This character is not producible by the ordinary agencies of human life, but requires the direct influence and inspiration of the divine mind. I am not saying that there are no means to be employed. I am not saying that education has nothing to do with the production of it; but education alone, as consisting in the application of the mind to natural forces, can not produce this spiritual character, in which true religion centres. Whatever agencies may be employed; whatever educating forces can be brought to bear—and you can not make them too broad or comprehensive—without God's Spirit they will all be as void as husbandry would be if the sun did not shine. There is to be the animating, vitalizing influence of the mind of God; the direct influence of the divine mind upon the human, as much as there is the direct penetration and piercing of the sun into the soil before the plant can be organized, or life under husbandry come forth.

Man's lower nature may be educated by the physical provisions that are made. The globe, the wants that spring from our relations to it, the fear of suffering, the joy and repose which spring from obedience to natural laws and the exigencies of society in which men find themselves—all these are so many masters by which men are taught. But do you suppose that they need no other teaching than this lower education, which is already provided in the physical structure of the globe? True, savage nations come up without revelation, and a certain degree of civilization results without special divine influences—a civilization which requires no inspiration for its development. A man's intellectual development is secured by the provisions of society. I can conceive a man to have been intellectually elevated by no other causations than those which result from the friction of mind on mind; by the stimulant of ambition; by

the desire of fame; by the influence of love. All these various motives will drive on the mere intellect to a very high degree of fineness, of comprehensiveness, and of power. The passions, too, and the domestic affections, may receive their education through visible causes with the life of the nation. If a man had nothing more in him than his bodily condition, his intellectual force, his passions and appetites, and his domestic affections, I should not feel disposed to say that he could not be educated by natural causes and by natural excitements. On the other hand, I should be disposed to say that God has made all the provision that you want in nature to educate man by obedience to natural causes. So far as man is a creature of time, all the means of time-culture have been produced within the circuit of time.

But man is not wholly a creature of time; he is more than that. He but takes this world on his way to the other. The provisions that are sufficient to make him a denizen of this world are not sufficient to make him a citizen of that other and greater realm where the body shall be abolished, where all these secular instincts shall have passed away, and where he shall stand as a spiritual creature. This character, which is to last beyond death, and is to be potential beyond the grave, it is that is to be produced beforehand, here, in man.

For the production of this higher spiritual state two elements are required—the secular education, and also the vitalizing power of the divine Spirit, the touch of the divine mind upon our own. How? We know not in what way it works. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit," says the Master.

The religious nature of man, then, is not produced—certainly it is not developed, still less is it made predominant by natural forces alone, but only by the superadded and distinctive influence of the divine mind upon the human. That gives life. Before man is touched by the divine energy he

is represented by the Scriptures as shrouded in sleep; he is spoken of as being dead; but when he comes into active relation with the divine mind he is said to live. And if the point of time at which he begins to live is spoken of, he is said to be born, or to be born again. He is regarded in his natural state as imprisoned; when he comes into active communion with God, he is represented as being no longer a prisoner, but set free—emancipated. "Children of liberty" these are called. In the natural state, like a bud in winter, men are undeveloped. When God gives them life, it is like the coming of summer; every bud bursts; every bulb starts, and soon the brown and desolate fields are covered with activity and life. But the field never resurrects itself. There is never any pulsation in the earth or tree until there is a pulsation in the king of all summers — in the sun itself. These figures run harmoniously and uniformly throughout the New Testament.

Lest any man should call his own fancies or mere excitements that divine inspiration, and so believe himself to be developing a true character in Christ Jesus (the moral elements alone being developed), there is a discriminating test of a true inspiration. Our Master says (in John) that we are the branches of the Vine; and that we are to know that we are in him by our bringing forth the same fruit that he brings forth. Divine fruit is to be the test. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

What are the fruits of the Spirit? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Against such there is no law.

Love: there is a narrow, natural feeling which is called love; but the universal feeling — did nature, uninstructed, ever produce that? Did there ever arise, in one single instance, a man that, by force of education, stood as God himself stands, ALL-LOVING, so that love was the characteristic, dominant, controlling element of his whole nature? Where have been the schools of philosophy that have taught this?

Philosophy has always dwelt in the outward court of the temple, which is intellect; the real holy of holies in every man is back of the understanding; it is in the soul; it is in the heart. The very highest of all others; the most munificent, the most divine, the most characteristic result of the touch of God's Spirit on man's is this power of loving. "But if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" saith Christ. God loves unlovely men. God loves unthankful and ungrateful men. So long as the sun forgets not to come, and so long as the showers continue to sweep over the ground of the evil and the good alike, so long there will be testimony in the heavens and in the air that God is one that knows how to love unloveliness. Love in us is a quality that has to be provoked and fed by others; but love in God dwells mightier than the sun in the air. Is it the summer that coaxes the sun to come back now from his far southern circuit? Is it the counsel of the daisies upon the hill-sides? Is it the voice of the all-persuasive violets in the nook that sends messages to the far-off spring, saying, "Come, for the grass tarries? Come, for the flowers wait?" And will the sun come to the place prepared for it at their call? Or is the sun carrying, rather, in his own nature, all the daisies, and all the violets, and all the fruits; and will he pour out of his royal love the summer warmth that shall make all the trees and the valleys green? So God does not wait to recognize loveliness before he loves; he produces loveliness by loving. He pours out of his own nature that which he admires in us. He sees himself in us and rejoices in us. The first fruit of the Spirit of God is love. We have a certain sort of poor, arithmetical numbered love; we love one, two, three, four, because they belong to our house; we love our neighbor; we love those that minister to us; we love those that love us; but we lack the quality of joyful benevolence which would enkindle our hearts for those who are themselves unlovely.

But let me not spend the whole sermon on one word. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, *long-suffering*—the self-

sacrificing element comes in—the sinking of self, the holding of one's self a sacrifice for others. The fruit of the Spirit is long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. If then, because we teach that true Christian character is the result of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, men begin to say, "We are inspired; we are the sons of God," we at once seek in them for the fruits of the Spirit. If your religion makes you self-righteous; if it makes you proud and vain; if you are censorious of other people not so good as you; if it makes you spiritual *dilettanti*—going around in the garden of the Lord sucking honey from every flower, a mere honey-bird in the Lord's garden—if this is the fruit of your religion, *you* have not the evidence of possessing God's Spirit. But if the Spirit of God, working and shining upon your spirit, has given predominant power to the higher elements of your higher nature, and if those elements are producing in you love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness, then you have the evidence in these fruits of the Spirit that the new character is forming, and is already in power, and is producing fruit in you.

If this view of the Christian scheme as it stands related to the human soul be correct, you will see, in the first place, the distinction between a doctrinal religion and a Christian disposition. We see also the difference between the road to religion as found out by the investigations of philosophy and the road to it as found out by positive experience. One sometimes wonders to see the Apostle Paul inveighing against the philosophies of his day in the manner in which he did; clearing himself from every imputation of being in fellowship with it; declaring that he expressly contemplated it when he went forth upon his mission and deliberately determined that he would put it under foot, and that he would have nothing to do with it. There never was a fairer antithesis between results that come from moral intuitions, and results that come from legitimate philosophical processes, than in the case of the Apostle Paul. He declared that the true religious life is

to be sought, not by intellectual processes, but is to be attained by moral states or intuitions, and by no other; and that it is the power which springs from moral intuitions which makes the cross of Christ the chosen and relied upon means by which to convert the world. In other words, while Greece had taken the sceptre of understanding, and gone forth to subdue barbarous nations, thereby to bring them into culture, Paul took mightier weapons—the heart, not the understanding—and declared that with that he would develop a power that should be mightier than reason. And he did.

There is great pertinence in Paul's declarations in our own time, for just now the world is running Greekwise. I am glad that Herbert Spencer has written his books; I am not sorry to have them read. They may unsettle a great many men, but it must needs be that these things take place. No great changes are made without great waste. We have to go through this period of scientific investigation and of re-examination of foundations. Let it come; but during the process, remember that whatever results you reach by mere reasoning come short of the very fringe of the edge of the garment of true religion, which expressly says that it does not belong in a sphere as low as that. For while reason deals with things created, the power of the Spirit of God deals in a sphere that is higher than ordinary creation; and all that chemistry, all that theology, all that history can reveal, comes far short of throwing any light upon the question, What does the Spirit of God do when it comes into willing contact with the higher moral sensibilities of man's moral nature? No science has reasoned so high as this question. It belongs, not to the realm of science, but to the realm of experience. All the fluctuations that have gone on in the world for two thousand years have not unsettled the conviction of Christian men that there is such a thing as a new life, and that there is such a thing, in this new life, as seeing invisible things; and that in this realm of invisible things there is a mighty power—a power far beyond that which belongs to

any merely human element, and which is the characteristic and distinctive element of Christian life, namely, the power which springs from the impartment to our moral nature of the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That can not be touched by philosophy. If this power exists, if it makes you more earnest, more benevolent, more pure, more gentle, more impetuous in love; if it purifies you, and makes you radiant and beautiful, can any body get rid of that effect? Let me but once paint a glowing picture like the Madonna; would you criticise it by going behind it to see what the canvas was made of, or by examining the pigments, and inquiring how they were compounded? There is the result—a painting, which stands at the head of faces in the whole history of art. There is one process by which you can meet reasoning and skeptical tendencies that can not be gainsaid, namely, produce in another man a character which represents God among men, in human form again, with his power to love, with his self-denying, self-sacrificing love, with his gentleness, his purity, his grace and beauty; set forth that character and say, "There is the evidence of religion." If you bring me an apple large and beauteous, and then undertake to persuade me by any argument that it is impossible that such a fruit should have grown in such a clime, I answer that no ship has touched this shore; here is the apple, there is the tree; there are others like it hanging on the tree, and this apple has grown upon this tree. You say it is impossible; that tree can not grow here; the season is too short, the climate is too cold for such fruit. But, after all, is not a tree full of apples better than any and all physiological arguments on the face of the earth? I do not care what botanists may say. Show me the tree with the apples on it, and I will take the tree as an argument against them all. Show me a man whose character lifts him above common men; whose head shines like a light-house (no matter how he is built at the bottom); show me a man that carries in him the power of a divine life (and no man can

mistake what that power is when he sees it)—he is an epitome of Christianity, and I place him as an argument against the intellectual philosophies of any and every man.

But the skeptic says, "I believe in Christian character, but do not believe in Christ." My reply is, Reproduce that character without this power, and I will accept it as an effectual refutation of the argument. On the other hand I say, There is this character, the most resplendent of any known on the face of the globe; a character more beautiful than ever Greek made marble or pigment made the human face upon canvas; a character embodying the attributes of the divine nature. I point the skeptic to this character and say, Let any man attempt to build a character like this by faith in Christ, and by trust and belief in him, and he shall succeed; let him attempt to build one without that faith and trust, and he will go just as far as the seventh of Romans, and he will not get a step farther—not a step. I defy any man to get out of the seventh of Romans into the eighth except by that one word "CHRIST." He who attempts it is like a leaf caught in the eddy of a stream; it whirls round and wants to get down the stream, but can not go. The seventh of Romans is an eddy in which the conscience swings round and round in eternal disquiet and dissatisfaction; the eighth of Romans is the talisman through which it receives the touch of divine inspiration, and is lifted above into the realm of true divine beneficence.

Secondly, we perceive here the true test of sects and churches.

Mr. Jonathan Edwards wrote his *Treatise on the Will* (one of the most extraordinary pieces of human thought and ingenuity on record) in a little room not so large as my platform, sitting in a hard, splint-bottomed arm-chair, on a pine table of most execrable construction. Now suppose that a school of philosophers should be found quarreling with a man that produces another *Treatise on the Will* equally great, by attempting to ascertain whether he wrote it in a room eight

by twelve, whether he wrote it on a pine table, every one of whose legs creaked, whether he wrote it sitting in a splint-bottomed arm-chair, and whether he wrote it on paper of a given age and with a goose-quill of a given pattern: they would resemble exactly the disputes that I see among churches as to whether this one or the other one has got the true religion. The room that has a man in it that can turn out a treatise like that of *Edwards on the Will* is the one that is to be honored. I care nothing about the room; it is the *Treatise* that gives power to the room, and not the room that gives power to the *Treatise*. There are some men that build magnificent churches. Religion, they think, requires that the windows should be painted; that the ceiling should be frescoed; that the apostles, and the saints, and godly men in great clouds should look down upon the worshipers through the misty air; that there should be a certain order of music at one end, and a certain order of service at the other. Do I despise any of them? I care not if there were fifty times as many such churches, if I see coming out of them stately Christian men. I do not care for the place where the man is made, nor for the instruments employed in making him. On the other hand, I see men and churches that disdain painted windows; that disdain frescoes; that will not even permit music in the church; and that despise pomp and circumstance as much as pomp and circumstance despises simplicity. Shall I go with them? If they make good men, I will take the men, but I do not care for the shop they make them in. What care I whether a man is made in a Quaker Church or in an Episcopal Church? These are all shops, and the doctrines are tools, and the members are merely workmen. I care nothing for the shop if it does not give me good work, whether the shop be made of gold or of clay. I take the work, and not the shop.

So in regard to sects. It is time men were done mousing through antiquity to find out doubtful evidences of authenticity; it is time they put the evidence of catholicity and or-

thodoxy where the apostle put it. "Ye are my epistles," said he, when he wanted to authenticate his mission. When men asked what authority he had, he pointed to that holy man or to that holy woman, and said, There is the testimony that I am an apostle; my work speaks for me. Now that sect is most orthodox that makes the best Christians, and that sect is most heretical that makes the poorest. That Church is nearest to God that makes the most summer in the world, and that Church is farthest from him that makes the most winter. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

This is a good test whereby to break down other churches, but how is it with you? What is its effect upon us? It is a great deal more a matter of concern to make this inquiry of ourselves than it is to make it of others. I recognize Christians in the Roman Catholic Church. I believe there are a great many very worthy ones there. I accept men as living a true and godly life if I find them in the Universalist Church, or in the Unitarian Church, or in the Swedenborgian Church, or in the High Episcopal Church, or in the Low one. The Low Episcopal Church is the bottom of the mountain where things grow; the High Episcopal Church is the top of Mount Blanc, very pure, very high, and extremely cold. I accept a Christian wherever I find him, and the evidence that he is a Christian is to be found, not in his Church, but in him. If there is the evidence in him that the Spirit of God rules his moral nature, so that he is bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit regularly and always, I accept him without a question as to where he comes from. If you ask me the question, "Which Church is most likely to produce such members?" I admit that here is a fair ground for discussion. I am not going to enter into it now. I think, however, that the Congregational polity is most likely to do it, and I think that my opinion is universally conceded—with the exception of about nine tenths of Christendom. Every body naturally thinks his own children the handsomest, and every Church thinks itself to be the best; nevertheless, there is such a thing

as a dispassionate and disinterested judgment in this matter. My own judgment is that we do some things better than any body else, and some things as bad as they can be done. My own judgment is that there are a great many excellences in the Episcopal Church; and I see in the Methodist economy some very excellent and noble things. I see in all the sects some elements of truth which make them worth keeping for the sake of those characteristic elements. The body of Christ does not belong to one Church or sect; it is common property. Christ is only known when you have taken all, not when you have taken any one of his characteristics.

Thirdly. From these views we may learn the distinction between morality and a living Christian character. There has been much discussion on the power and worth of morality, what it is, and what it amounts to; and I confess that the eagerness of most Christian churches to produce a truly Christian type of character has had the effect of giving them the appearance of undervaluing morality. On the other hand, men have more than made up by giving to morality a preponderant value which it never deserved and which it can not maintain.

What is morality? It is a compliance with the moral customs of the age in which you live. It is the establishment of a character according to the average conception of character in the nation or city where you are. Morality is one thing in New York; it is another thing in Boston; it is another thing in some mountain village in the western part of Massachusetts; and it is quite another thing in Texas. It fluctuates. Spiritual religion is absolute, and does not depend at all upon human opinion. It is a quality that is stamped upon the soul by God himself. It is the highest form of the development of the soul of man. Men sometimes ask, Will morality save me? This is exactly as if the wheat-fields, when they have grown three inches high, should ask, Are we not good wheat as far as we go? When wheat is grass, it may be on the way toward wheat, but it is not

wheat that a man can grind and eat until it has outgrown its grassage. Morality is but the beginning. It is virtue in the germ. It is not stealing; not swearing; not doing violence. In short, it is putting off the old man and his works without putting on the new man. It is the negative form of religion. It is that part of religion which exists in exclusions, with a very moderate development of the germs of right feeling. It has no complete growth in it. It has no power within itself. It has a kind of ideal attainment, but it is an attainment made possible only by the help of the Holy Spirit. It is the faint beginning, the rough outline, the charcoal sketch of the future. That is morality. Is it not good? Certainly it is good. Is it enough? No, it is not enough. It is enough to start on, but it is not enough to stand on.

What if a man should take a farm in the upper part of Westchester County, where rocks and soil quarrel with each other for the supremacy, and should fence it in. He puts up a fence that keeps out all intruders. There lies the farm. Having defended it against intruders, he goes every year to live off of it. What does he get? Merely wild grass and sorrel—nothing else. Some farms would bring a little more, and some still less than that. That is a husbandry that answers to morality. What is religion? The thrifty farmer goes over the field, and sees that, because of the rocks, the sun has no chance to reach the soil; so he digs out the rocks, and removes them. He sees that the ground is so low and full of moisture that the sun and dew falling upon it do no good, and he drains it. He sees that the soil is light—loose only on the surface, and he subsoils it, and makes the soil a great deal deeper. He sees that, after all that he has done, the soil is still unproductive because there is not much substance in it, and so he casts on a superabundant covering of enriching substances. And after he has thus fenced his farm to protect it from the cattle, and removed the rocks that the sun may act upon the soil, and drained away the surplus moisture, and subsoiled it, and filled it full of fertilizers, he plants the best seed that he

can get, and has then done his share. Then the sun takes hold, and is a midwife to every crop; suns them, swathes them, nurses them, dandles them, and brings them up to full ripeness. The soul is the soil, which, under morality, is productive only of grass and sorrel, but in its regenerated state produces wheat, and corn, and grapes, and pears, and peaches, and apples, and flowers that are beautiful to the eye. That is religion; that is the fruit of the Spirit of God. The man that is content with morality is content with an undeveloped farm—his moral nature. The man that is not content with morality will bring his moral nature to the highest form of spiritual culture that can be produced in the human soul by the direct influences of the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly. Let me point you, in view of this subject, to the difference between what are called experiences of religion and what may be called permanent religion. If character is that which God requires, then mere fluctuations and visions, mere joys and sorrows, can be regarded only as transient experiences. There be many men that have no other evidence that they are Christians than that at some period of their lives they went through very deep impressions, and those impressions led them at the time to make certain resolutions; but after that there seemed to be no more divine work going on in them. They remained substantially as they were. Their character is that which natural traits or causes produced in them. We find no fruits of the Spirit in them. There is no evidence that a divine influence has been superadded to their moral characters. They do not differ from those that have sprung up under the ordinary influence of human society.

Far be it from me to decry experiences, whether of sorrow or of joy; I believe in them. But experiences are not character.

If they lead to it, if they are so many steps on the way to it, they are well; let them continue to aid in building up a true Christian character. But if there be but occasional

emotions, they do not amount to, or result in, Christian character. You may come to church, and when the hymns are sung, your soul may thrill with joy; in prayer your soul may melt in contrition; you may be thus susceptible to all human influences; you may seem to live a religious life; you may have religious sensibility; but you have no evidence that you are a Christian until there begins to be in you the permanent elements of Christian character. That is what Christ seeks to make—a new manhood.

Fifthly. In the light of these truths we perceive the utter inadequacy of God's revelation in the material world to meet the work that is required to be done to give spiritual life. I believe that in the work of education, in the work of understanding the nature of the human soul, and of eliminating the truth respecting each faculty, and of discovering wiser methods of presenting the truth to those faculties, science will yet have much to do. I believe that the Church itself, through the instrumentality of science, is to be made more beneficial, and that it will wield weapons more powerful than any that have yet been wielded. I look, therefore, with favor upon the fact that in the external world science is preparing new materials and new instrumentalities, and that it is working so nearly in harmony with the Church of Christ. But, after all, it is my conviction that there are no results flowing from natural causes that may or can supersede the fashioning effect and the divine influence of the Spirit of God. They work together with God. As science teaches the husbandman to work in better co-operation with natural laws, so we are taught to work seeking a better understanding of the human soul; but there never will be such room for skill, for masterly manipulation, as that the soul will not need the vitalizing influence of the Holy Spirit.

Let us, then, dismiss all fears and all apprehensions in respect to the Church, and in respect to the cause of Christ in this world. God takes care of his own work. If the Holy Ghost is shed abroad, there will be signal instances of its ac-

tion. While nature will more and more unfold itself; while God, in accordance with his august designs, will build up a fairer human society; while a human conduct, higher yet and nobler yet, will join therewith, there will be over all and higher than all that character resulting in righteousness by the power of the Holy Ghost, which will depend, not upon the will of man, nor on the flesh, nor on blood, but on the power of God himself.

Let me read then again the word of God with which I opened this discourse, and which comes to us with signal power:

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

May this divine birth be yours. May those clouds that keep the shining of the Spirit of God from your heart break and depart. May all those influences by which God draws near to your soul to unlock its doors and do his promised work have abundant entrance to your souls; may all those influences which lead you to resist, and hide you from the Spirit of God, pass away, and you be induced to open your souls to him; and as the earth receives the returning sun, and more and more unlocks to his coming as he speeds more and more northward, so may it be with you; so, when God draws near by the power of the Holy Ghost, may you more and more rejoice as you feel the power of his presence in your souls.

PRAYER.

O thou that art infinitely merciful, behold how we walk in darkness. We walk in darkness, whilst thou dost abide in eternal light. With thee is no variableness or shadow of turning, but with us all is change. Uncertitudes hang over us more than we can count. All our power is in seeming. If thou wert to forget to look upon us, we should perish, as

frost perishes, in a moment, under the sun, dissolving and passing away. For life and breath, for every pulsation, for all the strange and wonderful things that are wrought out in us by the wisdom of God, for all that we think and feel, for hope and for aspiration, we are dependent upon thee. We are helpless. We hang upon thy remembrance. Thy faithfulness is our only resource. Between us and annihilation is only God. We rejoice that thou art our surety, and art sufficient. Because thou livest, we shall live also. In the greatness of thy nature thou dost comprehend all thy creatures. It is possible for thee to think of all, to bear all in their endless conditions, and, as they move toward thee, to gather them in thine infinite love, and house them in heaven. Thou hast prepared thrones, and crowns, and sceptres, and harps, and palms, and robes for those that are washed in the blood of redemption, and that come up to be kings and priests before God. We throw away our doubts; we throw away all over-curious questions of things beyond our reach. It is in thyself that our souls desire to believe. We lean toward thy word and its precious promises. A man of our counsel it is indeed. It is our guide. It is a staff. We lean upon it in a hard and rough way. It is to us a light in a dark place. It shines into that darkest of all places, where death reigned, and fear held empire, and drove men from the grave with dreadings and tremblings. Now into that portal pour the beams of thy light. Thy truth has dispelled the darkness; there is no death, and all terrors are gone; and where men beheld a pit of gloom, and shuddered as they looked upon the phantom shapes of terror, we behold the bright and pearly gate, radiant with unimagined glory, standing open to let us through; and cares drop off, and sorrows cease, and all the burdens and imperfections of our mortal life are left behind. Parting from the world, and reaching immortality, we stand in our spiritual nature beholding God, rejoicing in his ineffable love, rising under the touches of his soul, and going on in infinite progression forever and forever. For bringing such precious truth to light, O Lord Jesus; for making us the heirs of such glorious promises; for giving thy Spirit, that we might be able to attain unto all those things which thou hast revealed to us, we render thee most hearty thanks. And if at last we should prove conquerors, it will be through Him that loved us. If we endure to the end, it will not be by our virtue or by our firmness, but by thy fidelity. And to all the joys of heaven will this be added—that it is God-given. Every rapture, every gratitude, every love, and every in-

flection of each blessed attribute of our ransomed souls will be of thee, and will bring us nearer to thee. We throw our arms about thee, O blessed Promiser, and beseech thee to be faithful to each of us in all the way of life. Succor those that are in peril. Rescue those that are tempted more than they are able to bear. Dear Jesus, help the helpless; comfort the afflicted; shine upon the darkened; soothe the troubled; give peace to the bestormed. Do thy blessed work in the midst of thy people, that they may acclaim their gratitude, and that thy name may be blessed in the great congregation.

Grant that as, one by one, we are enlightened and cheered; as we are rescued and established; as we are lifted through old sins to new virtues; as we find ourselves drawing near to the holy and heavenly, we may bear witness to thy grace. May we be witnesses of Christ, and honor his name, by testifying what he has done for our souls.

We thank thee for this long, bright day. How full hath it been of thy divine light! How full hath it been of sweet and blessed thoughts of God and immortality! O what pledges dost thou give us! How sweet is their memorial and their record! May they bear something from us to thee, and not go out in darkness and in night. And may all that we do be well-pleasing in thy sight.

And grant, when all our Sabbaths on earth are ended, that we may find rest. There is a rest that remaineth for the people of God—else, where are our beloved? Thitherward we have sent many. Escaped from our cries and strong-holding —escaped as a bird that flies and rises rejoicing, they have gone. They rest with thee. Our thoughts pursue them. Our hearts find them. Our eyes shall see them no more forever; but we are tending thitherward. We follow faster than we know, and ere long one and another of us shall stand in Zion and before God. And when there we are joined to all whom we love, and to him who loved us and gave himself for us, we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Amen.

XVIII.

The Second Incarnation.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath evening, December 22d, 1867.

The Second Incarnation.

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."—Eph., i., 22, 23.

This passage, if you remember the context—and surely no Christian man that ever read it forgets it—is a glowing and rapturous recital of the results of Christ's incarnation, his holy life and obedience, his sufferings and his death. The apostle prays for his brethren that God will give them the spirit of wisdom, that the eyes of their understanding may be enlightened, that they "may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

So that there is not only this retrospect of the glorification of Christ in his own person, but a glowing prophecy of a second and yet more glorious incarnation of Christ. There was a first coming, and there is to be a second coming of the Savior. He is supreme in heaven. He is also to be supreme on earth. It is something yet to come. For all things are

to be put under his feet. Not put under his feet as held by absolute power, but brought into willing subjection. This is language borrowed from warfare, but translated into moral thought. There is to be the subjugation to Christ of all the elements of human nature and human society. The world, its population, its organizations, every element that can be developed from the great laws of physical nature and of human life, are yet to be perfectly subdued, and put under the complete control and inspiration of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When it is declared that the Church is yet to fill all things, that the whole world is to be subject to it, and that Christ is to be the head of it, I do not understand it to be the Church as represented to us by its mere organization. I understand it to be the Church of the human race—the great Church of the universal humanity. Christ is the head of all who are in soul and mind vitally influenced by him, just as the body is influenced by the brain. There is no part of the human body that is not dominated by the brain. It is the controlling centre. The blood, the nerves, the tissues, the secretions, the very substance-matter of bone and muscle, all are directly, as well as indirectly, influenced by the nerve-centre—the great centre of life and being, so that there is no part of the human body that is not controlled by the brain. And the whole world is yet to be as perfectly controlled by the mind and will of Christ, as the human body is now controlled by the mind and will of the individual. The Church is yet to represent the race; and that whole race is to move as obediently, as instinctively, as spiritually and refinedly as the whole body of a cultivated man moves obedient to the cultivated brain.

Christ is to fill all with himself—all governments; all laws; all policies under the government; all commercial and industrial organizations; all societies; all circles; all households; all individuals. All are to be filled with the mind, and will, and spirit of the Head; and Christ is to be the brain of the whole world. In other words, all physical economies and

civil organizations, just as much as spiritual economies and religious organizations, are to be absolutely filled and dominated by him.

This is what I call the second incarnation. It is the injection, as the first incarnation was the lapse, as it were, into the human body, of the mind and will of Christ—the divine Christ, subjecting him to the law of matter, to its limitations and its infirmities, as we are controlled by the physical laws which surround us. So there is to be a more glorious incarnation, by which the sum total of the globe itself, and all its members, are to be gloriously filled full of the mind, and feeling, and will, and disposition of Christ. As one little body bore about his spirit, so this greater body, the comprehensive race and the globe, is to bear about in it the mind and will of God; and every thing is to move harmonious from pole to pole, and round and round the world. The whole world is to be as perfectly harmonious as the whole body is harmonious, under the control of an intelligent, healthy, right-minded man.

This is poetry indeed, but it is the poetry of prophecy. It is the ideal of progress. It is that bright conception toward which, whether men know it or not, they are certainly drifting or steering. Some steer and some drift, according as they go voluntarily or involuntarily. By agencies that men understand to be working toward that result, by others that men have no idea are so working, and by yet others that seem to be working against it, the world is moving toward this grand consummation. When that time comes, Christ will fill all things with himself. That is, there will be a complete introduction of the mind and will of God into the whole organization of society, into the whole procedure of business, into the whole flow of social life, into the personality of each individual of the human race.

The original incarnation of the Savior has not been too much, but only too exclusively considered. It has been assumed that it was the only one. Though it was greater than

we can imagine, and more glorious than it is in the power of man to depict, yet there is to be a second incarnation even more glorious, that has scarcely been considered.

Still reflecting upon the first and minor incarnation, let us turn toward that other and major one that is taking place, and is to take place to the end.

Christ was born into the world through and under the ministration of natural law. He did not hover, a spirit, like another star, upon the globe. He subjected himself to the control of matter and of the laws of society. He took upon himself flesh, with all the infirmities, limitations, and physical ills which belong to it. And I take it that the whole physical condition of the human race corresponds to Christ's body. When his spirit was wrapped in it, incarnated, he grew in stature. He was born an infant, a babe; he grew to be a young man; he ripened into full manhood. He did not spring into life as a spark struck springs into place instantly. He came in at the minimum, and subjected himself to all the laws of unfolding and progress—the physical laws under which all men are shaped, reared, and ripened.

In the progress of this great second incarnation of which I have been speaking, the body of Christ is the world, the race. There is to be a period of physical ripeness. We are going through all those successive stages which precede the final development. I connect the material globe intimately with Christianity. I connect all those processes by which society builds, originates, constructs, invents, and develops, by which wealth is produced, by which comfort, leisure, information, power of every description are gained—all these I connect with the purpose of God in Christ Jesus. Nor do I believe that this world will ever be converted to Christ until its physical conditions are dominated by Christ. I do not believe that any power that is given to the ministry, nor any fidelity that is given to laymen, nor any diligence that is given to parents, nor any revivals of religion, will ever be able to make progress against the evolution of natural laws

by which so large a part of the globe fail to be in body what they were created to be. But I believe that the progress of the Gospel means such a knowledge of the laws of body and material conditions in this life as shall make the whole course of nature work for Christianity. There shall come a time, I believe, when all unhealth shall, as it were, cease. Now there are thousands and hundreds of thousands born into life in idiocy; there are uncounted numbers born crippled, bearing through life a body of wretchedness coiled up in various distortion. There are multitudes born with such unbalance of faculties as that the problem of their life consists in simply resisting evil and maintaining a bare existence of good. There are men whose strongest native faculties or tendencies are basilar and animal. They are not responsible for any such facilities for development as those who are born with high moral and intellectual endowments. Nor do I believe that the Gospel of Christ is to contend forever against these terrific inequalities. Why? Because I *know* that the God who revealed the word revealed the world; and as he has written in the one his law for voluntary conduct, so in the other he has written his law of involuntary education. The law of descent, spoken of as early as the time of Moses, by which alike the sins and the virtues of parents are transmitted to their children, runs through races and societies. By it men may be bred to health and away from disease. Shall we forever give up this right hand of God's art, this skillful, fashioning hand of his architect, to the uses of the herds and beasts of the field? Will there never be intelligence so that more and more men shall avail themselves of this divine economy by which life shall be perpetuated in the lines of health rather than in the lines of sickness? Now paralytics are produced from paralytics; insanity is inherited from the insane; drunkenness perpetuates itself through the veins of drunkards' children. Wrong tendencies become transmissible, as, on the other hand, right tendencies are transmissible. And the time is coming when the

Church is not only to train the child in the admonition of the Lord, but when he is to be born in conditions favorable to religious instruction. It will by-and-by be recognized a sin and a shame for men to marry without a wise consideration of those divine laws which lead to physical health. It is a sin for a man, if he but knew it, to go on filling the world with disease, with malformation and ill-adjusted mental qualities. Nor will this world ever be occupied and pervaded by the divine Spirit till it is preceded by this growth of the body; until these great fundamental laws, written before Sinai spoke—written in the nature of things long before Calvary spoke, and needing no other interpretation than the groans of victims made manifest every where, in hospitals, in houses of sickness, in travailing, groaning, perishing millions —until these great primal laws, by which the body of the world is to be constructed for righteousness, are understood and obeyed. If a man be poetical, we never marvel that some of his children are poetical. We marvel if they are not. If a man be a musician, we expect that his children will sing. If a man be noble and valiant, men exclaim if his children are not so. And the expectation is founded upon the structure of nature. We shall yet learn that moral qualities as well as mental, virtues as well as sins, are transmissible from generation to generation.

This is not the time for me to undertake to explain what is this great system of law. But it exists; and I believe that religious teachers must yet turn their attention to this subject, and that there must yet be a growth of the body which is favorable to religious growth. Science is to bow down, and religion is to be subserved by physical law. The way of the Lord is to be cast up, and is to be prepared, and we are not forever going to take men after they have been born with a physical predisposition to evil, or after they have been badly cultured and confirmed in evil habits. We are not forever going to take them late in life, after they have become bad men, and turn them about to make Christians of

them, barely saving them in the future state. There will a time come when we are to build up society from the beginning with well-born and Christianly educated men; when men early in life shall give tokens of a sanctified conscience, and of the joy, and enthusiasm, and beauty of a noble life in a noble body, fired and filled with inspirations of honor. And this shall be true, not of single individuals merely, but of households, and of communities, and of nations. The time will come when the sun, marching round the globe, shall not see a cripple, nor turn his face away from one man born sick. Not in your day; not in mine; not in the next generation. We have a great while to wait for that. That is the consummate blossom. That is one of the fruits that come last. It is autumnal in the great year of time.

Not only was Christ born into the body, and subject to the laws of the body, as again Christ is to be born into the body of the world, and influenced by it—subject and controlling at the same time—but Christ grew in wisdom. In other words, he entered into the unfolding series. Nothing can be more certain than that this is the economy of life. Nothing is more certain than that it is declared to be so by the Savior. The kingdom of God is likened unto a grain of mustard-seed, which is the smallest of all seeds when it is planted, but which, when it has grown, is a tree in whose branches the birds of the air rest. Science at last, tardily, is declaring to us, in blessed commentary, the full meaning of this—the unfolding, the developing series of creation. Our Savior came into the world; and as he was to be human, it was necessary that he should be subject, also, to this unfolding, developing process. And it is recorded that he grew in wisdom as well as in stature.

A correspondency there will be in the greater incarnation. There is. There has been. Men have never received, in one sense, a full revelation. They have only received the seeds of revelation. They have been taught, "Thou shalt love;" but *love* is only a seed. The impulse is there. Every im-

pulse necessary for the formation of a moral subject under a moral government is given to man. When a man is born his faculties are there, just like so many masses of paint on a painter's palette. There is blue, red, green, all in lumps of pigment. Now there are pictures in those paints, but they are to be fashioned. Faculty is mere pigment with a certain color, but Christianity is the picture that men make. Men are born with certain tendencies; with the sentiments of conscience and of hope; with the feelings of love, and fear, and reverence. But these are undeveloped. Men seem to think that love is a single heart-throb. Love possesses infinite gradations, and complexities, and relations; and when men begin to exercise the feelings, they understand but a few of these. They are, by experience, to unfold the feeling; that feeling is to take hold on their life; that life is mixed with other lives; and so ten thousand questions are to arise, in actual experience, from the development of this feeling of love.

It is supposed that justice is a simple quality. It is one of the most complex, perplexing, recondite, and unknown of qualities. We know what justice is in some things, in certain low relations, as between man and man. It has been established by custom in some cases, and by law in others; but the world had to grow a great while before it could know what is just under what now seems very simple circumstances. As circumstances change, and questions become more complex, it becomes more difficult to tell what justice is. Justice itself becomes composite as it becomes mixed with taste, and love, and other elements. There is a vast literature to it. As the alphabet is simple in each letter, but is the father of an infinite literature, so the combination of these simple qualities becomes voluminous in possibilities.

Now this is a matter which the world has never been taught by any revelation. The world has been left to find out what is pure, and high, and true; what is good, what better, what best. The world was not told what things were

tasteful. For ages men have died, and lain down upon the very plant which, if they had known and plucked, would have cured them, and yet there was no whisper from above by which they were enlightened respecting it, from the beginning to the end of their life. There is no nurse, no physician, no revelation that teaches such things. Men have gone groping homely and coarse through life, with the means of refinement close at hand, and there has been no disclosure of them. Their discovery is a part of growth. Men were born with faculties capable of combinations, and evolvements, and infinite complexities, but what were the benefits to be derived from those elementary faculties they themselves had to find out. Time had to pass. The world, as it were, had to go through its childhood and its youth into its manhood, under the supervision of Providence and of a moral dispensation, but there was a tendency to develop higher and higher conceptions of every one of the cardinal elements that correspond to the attributes of God. For we are but sparks from the great parent, and our faculties are equivalents in us of the divine attributes.

Men are to learn, then, the laws under which they are born, physically, socially, and morally; and the world, as a whole, is to find out gradually how to incarnate the several elements of truth, of justice, and of honor.

I believe that the time is to come when every government on this globe shall reproduce, in a more perfect form than now, the great principles of divine love and divine mercy; when the whole system of law that exists under governments shall be elevated, and made nobler, and finer, and more efficacious; this is a part of the process of the second incarnation of God, the injection of the divine Spirit into law and development in society, where there is so much need of fidelity, so much need of manliness, so much need of truth, so much need of every thing that is humanizing. I believe that in this great realm there is to be the pervasive influence of Christ's spirit. He is to fill all things.

What or who now own governments? The passions; avarice; pride; ambition; self-interest; hatred; cruelty. These own the great organizations of society. Who owns New York? The devil! Where can you find more than there incarnated the essential spirit of self-seeking and grasping selfishness? Where can you find the will and the whole machinery of the community more intensely working, not for justice, equality, and perfect happiness, but for purposes of guile and selfishness?

Going from the city government to the state government, time and experience have compelled laws to work for the government of the whole. But look at the special organization. Read the thoughts of men that preside. Go into the councils of men that caucus. Take the mind and the will of men that control affairs. What is it? Nobler conscience? higher purity? clearer philanthropy? These words are footballs of ridicule. What is it that they tell you when you introduce your thought of a nobler organization and a nobler administration? "Why, you are a man of theories; you are a *doctrinaire*. Human nature is stubborn stuff. While you are among men, you must be as other men, and deal as they do."

Now there is a time coming when governments, in all their laws and policies, and in all their officers, shall tend upward, and not forever downward. Thus far on the earth the bottom of the brain has had the advantage. The time is coming when the top of the brain shall have supremacy. The time is coming when purity is to be more popular than impurity. To-day, they that attempt to reclaim men from inordinate passions, that attempt to clean the Augean stables in New York, are regarded as hideous and hateful meddlers. When the reformer attempts to check vice, he is met with the same outcry that met his Master, "Art thou come to torment us before our time?" Men still cry "Peace, peace," for wickedness; but the time is to come when magistrates, when governments, when laws and their administration, when policies, yea, and, strange as it may sound to you, when *parties* shall

seek moral elevation—yea, when they shall be imbued and filled with the spirit of Christ, just as the human body is filled full of the vibrating life-giving flood.

Will not that be the millennium? You may think it is fantasy. It is poetry now, but it will be fact yet. For there is to be a second great incarnation; and as the spirit divine filled the body of Christ, and filled it full, so that great body which is the Church, which is the whole human race, is yet to be filled full of him who filleth all things with all things.

And what a day that will be when all the great agencies of society shall be working one way! Consider for a moment what will be the rapidity of life when the declaration is fulfilled that the child *shall be a hundred years old;* or, in other words, shall know in early life as much as the old man now knows. The child of the Sabbath-school knows to-day more about life than the priest did in the time of Henry VIII. Every child in the Sunday-school knows on many important themes as much, and even more, than did venerable bishops five hundred years ago. The child of the ordinary common school knows more secrets than Roger Bacon. The sages of the past, that swept over a few books, and maintained their secrets, and died without disclosing them, could not have stood an examination before a common village school-mistress of to-day. But the time is coming when men shall be, as it were, born a hundred years old; when the elements of knowledge will be reduced to such forms that men will take them in at the earliest periods of life; and that which has been the sum total of the world's striving will be the capital on which men will begin to trade in the great mental economy.

The conditions of life will all be changed. Hitherto the world has carried forward a wretched population—wretchedly circumstantial. See how they take emigrants across the sea. They huddle them together in vessels in which every condition of health and comfort is disregarded, and where oftentimes there break out the measles, the fever, the cholera,

till the ship becomes a perfect lazar-house, a floating hospital. So the world has hitherto carried its unwashed crew. But the time is coming when the wonderful economies, the marvelous laws for nourishing and strengthening man, which have been unknown, and the want of which has made the world travail in pain until now, will be discovered, organized, and made available at the beginning of life. All men will come into life with better opportunities, physically, mentally, morally, and will be surrounded by institutions that will take advantage of their advanced cerebral condition, and will carry forward their development, supervising and interpenetrating it by their influence.

There is to come in fuller measure the down-shining inspiration of God's Spirit, giving sensibility and power to all it touches; and the whole world is not only to come into that state in which men are born in favorable conditions individually, but it is to come into that state in which they shall be confederated into families, with sweeter affections, with truer conceptions of life, and with better ways of developing and manifesting them. And this affection of the household is to be enlarged till family touches family, and neighborhoods are formed. And these neighborhoods are to open and bloom into each other, and are to be but parts of communities. And these communities are to express a finer taste, a sweeter philanthropy, a better, higher, and more noble justice. All the processes of society are to exhibit more of Christ; so that at last the day shall come when in all the earth, like a man without a pain from head to foot, mankind shall be without a sadness, or a sigh, or a sorrow; when the whole globe, in all its parts, shall be filled full of Him who filleth all things, who is the head and animating brain of time and the world; and the globe, no longer singing a requiem, no longer singing of things gloomy and sad, clothed with light and inspired with joy, shall go chanting in its rounds, and the heaven and the earth shall sing together; and so the consolation shall come.

I. If this be so, then, first, dismiss the unworthy conceptions of Christ's saving which have sprung from a judgment formed upon the inchoate and undeveloped state of things that has existed hitherto. Many men seem to think that the Gospel is sent into this world as a life-boat, to pick off from the foundering wreck as many of the great population as they possibly can, and let the rest go down. Thousands of churches and societies proceed upon the philosophy that there is no use of attempting to save the race.

But Christianity is not a mere wrecker's boat. In saving men, we ought to do it with the feeling that we are aiming toward the final consummation—the salvation of mankind. I do not believe the world is to be burned up and so purified; I do not believe the earth is to undergo a sudden transformation; that there is to be an immediate change in the globe or in human society. I believe the world will come to its final state as my tulips will come to blossom next spring. They are in the winter now, but they are in the bulb, and will come forth. And the world is coming to blossom yet. Not in my day, and not in your day, but ere long, in ages to come. As it takes a great many years to bring an orchard into full fruitfulness, but as at last the trees come to maturity and begin to bear fruit, so by-and-by men will begin to be fruitful unto God, and the whole globe will be a great tree of the Lord, filled with divine fruit on every side and on every branch.

II. This whole globe is my Lord's; and when I speak about any thing that concerns his kingdom, whether it be science, or art, or learning, or politics, or any thing else, I am talking about my Father's business. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." I am his son; he has sent me to speak about the things pertaining to his kingdom; and where is the man that dare look me in the face and tell me that I am a meddler with things that do not concern me or my Lord, when I am speaking of the spirit of love in laws and governments? "Get thee behind me, Satan." Not meddle

with politics? He that does not know how wisely to meddle with public affairs in preaching the Gospel, does not know how to preach the Gospel. What would you think of one of the apostles, in the time of Christ, who had been commissioned to give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, if he had gone about reading discourses on medicine, and never curing any body, saying, "My business is to teach medicine?" What is the use of teaching medicine if you do not cure any body? And what is the use of preaching a theology that does not disturb any body? Is the Gospel a singsong lullaby to put people asleep in carnal indulgences? Is the Gospel designed to give peace to men while yet they are in their sins? Is it a cat's-cradle, that is merely meant to change and take on all manner of shapes for our passing entertainment? If a man talks sweet things, and smooths men down, rubbing the fur the right way, and pats them, men say that is "preaching the Gospel." But when a man preaches the Gospel so that men taste the bitter which is going to cure them; when he preaches the Gospel so that he that has an ulcer is being healed; so that he that was born blind is receiving his sight; so that the proud Pharisee is rebuked and the cunning priest is put to shame, wicked men do not like the disturbance, and say, "Why do not you preach like the meek and lowly Jesus?" The meek and lowly Jesus! He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees!" So I say, "Woe unto you, respectable liquor-dealers!" Not meddle with carnal affairs? That was precisely the opinion of the devils that possessed men, and that said, "Art thou come to torment us before our time? What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth?"

Nay, if there is going on through the ages this silent, and grand, and solemn incarnation of the heart and spirit of Christ that is to dominate the globe as the brain does the body, then the very thing for which the ministry is ordained is to help that work forward; to make the crooked places straight, and the rough places plain; to bring down the high

hills, and lift up the low valleys, and make the way of the Lord plain before his face, and make straight in this desert a highway for our God. And while I know there are many different ways of doing this, and while I respect those men who confine themselves, some to an intellectual way, some to a conversational and social way, and some to a way of moral sentiment; while I recognize their liberty, and acknowledge that they have the power by these minor methods to accomplish the work imperfectly to a certain extent, let them not undertake to rebuke those that feel the impulse of a larger way, and seek to be workers together with God in the whole glorious process of redemption by which he means to subdue the world and all principalities to himself. If a man is called to the preaching of the Gospel, he is called not only to the liberty, but to the dignity, and honor, and supremacy of so preaching it that every thing in life shall be seasoned with it, shall feel its smart as well as its quickening power, and shall be healed by it.

III. If these views be correct, then all those tendencies which now alarm and discourage Christian men, as, for instance, the insurrection of science against faith, have no real cause of fear in them. As it was necessary that the child after he was born should have swaddling-clothes for the body, though the moment before, his spirit, ethereal, wore no robe, bore no matter, so Christ, the moment he was fixed in the flesh, needed the ministration of robe and vestment. He cried as the child cries. He entered life at the lowest point of human existence, and moved upward through all the various stages of human growth, being tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.

Now, as I have already said, the globe itself, that is, the realm of natural material laws, is to receive a second incarnation of Christ. Science is now making the swaddling-clothes of Christianity. If it takes from the world many ecclesiastical notions which men would not otherwise give up, very good. The world will be the better for it. If there be many doc-

trinal ideas that melt down in the presence of science, very good. The world will be the wiser for it. If there be many superstitions which are supposed to be religion, but which are not religion, and they are taken away, very good. The world will be the better for it. No matter if for the moment it seems as if our God is taken away, so long as it proves to be only an idol that is taken. There may come a time when the scientific men of the day will pause in their faith in Christ and in the word of God; but it will be only a pause; and when the scientific problems are wrought out, it will be found that the great marrow-truths of the word of God have no better demonstrations than the demonstrations of science itself. I do not yet see the demonstration; but there are many questions to be solved yet. We are growing and developing. And I have faith in God as manifested in nature, just as much as I have faith in God as manifested in revelation. It is but one God, and the revelation is one, made in two forms, which will not clash with each other, time being given for them to unfold.

Therefore I dismiss all fears for the future, and look forward with hope. If the things of to-day seem to be working against religion, I believe another generation will prove that they were working for it.

IV. If these views be correct, we shall not see the true glory of redemption here. We can not imagine it. We shall not be in a condition to see it until we have passed from this mortal state. We are told that a man in the midst of a battle is the least able to describe the battle. The smoke and noise, and the intensity of the conflict, prevent him from having a large view of the movements of the whole field. We are secluded. Each age is, as it were, but a note in the whole period of time. It can not be that we rise so high, or stand at a period so late, that we see the whole disclosure. Then only shall we understand the nature of Christ, then only the comprehensive plan of his mercy, then only this second and greater incarnation, by which he interjects the

whole globe and its processes with his Spirit, when we reach the other world. Then and there only shall we be furnished with that vision by which we may see his grace, so that worthily we may worship him, rejoicing that he is lifted above all kings, all princes, all principalities of every name.

While, then, with the whole Christian world, we celebrate the birth of Christ and the incarnation of the Son of God, do not spend all the time in looking back to the first incarnation, but, with some instruction of faith, with joy and hope, with gratulation and reverence, look forward and see the process by which the race is rising up, more and more touched with the divine Spirit, more and more impleted with the mind and will of God in Christ Jesus—look forward to that perfect day when Christ shall have filled all with himself; when all things shall be put under his feet; when he shall be head over all things to his body, the Church, which is the assembled race of holy men, the fullness of him that filleth all with all.

XIX.

Grace Abounding.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, in the Fall of 1867.

Grace Abounding.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."—Eph., iii., 20, 21.

This is a doxology. A doxology is an inscription of praise. It usually deals with some title of God. The more common phrase in doxology is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom praises are sung. But you observe that the peculiarity of this doxology is that it has no title—that is, no single word, such as we are accustomed to associate with the idea of God. The whole of the twentieth verse, with the exception of the last clause, is a title of God; and as it is a complex title, it becomes, from its singularity, more striking. "Now unto"—whom?—"him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." That is the title. That is a name of God, to whom is to be glory in the Church throughout all ages.

You will observe that this title indicates not simply power, but disposition. It points us not so much to God's majesty and dominion, not so much to his relations, to the framework of creation, or to the laws by which it is regulated, as to the disposition of God in the administration of that kingdom which every where is ascribed to him. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Notice further that it is an inscription to God, of the habit and disposition of doing abundantly not only, but *exceeding* abundantly, and not only exceeding abundantly, but *exceed-*

ing abundantly more than we ask or think—more than it is in man to want, or to know that he wants; more than he can compass by that ever-weaving thought that lies behind words.

But that is not all. It might be well said that the great majority of men are themselves but feeble thinkers; and what could they think that would be worthy of such an administration as that of a God who does more than the highest orders of men can think? Of course I do more than any babe asks, and that may be a very little, because a babe can ask nothing. I do more than a child one year old can ask or think; but a child of one year old can ask very little, and think still less. But it is said, "Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, *according to the power that worketh in us.*" When men's thoughts are touched; when men's natures are awakened and inspired; when, in their noblest moments, with their best faculties under the divine influence, they are lifted up as in a transfiguration, and behold all things in their plenitude of beauty, and glory, and truth—then, in those moments when God is working powerfully in them, and teaching them to think by teaching them to feel (and feeling is the truest mother of feeling) —even then it is said that God does exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think. When the soul is on its wings; when it follows the illumination of faith; when it enters into the secret of divine existence; when it takes the noblest conception of its own destiny, and has the truest sense of its own wants; when it is most cleansed from the selfishness of the earth—from its pride, from its vanity—and is in nearest sympathy with those things which make heaven, then will it speak till language shall fail, and then will the words flow on till thoughts fail, then will feeling flow still beyond thought, and still beyond that God does for us not merely up to the measure of our thinking and asking, but exceeding abundantly beyond that. Language can give no farther conception of the amplitude of divine generosity than is conveyed

in such words as these, when in their contexts they are sought out, and their real meaning is arrayed.

It is necessary that we should emphasize the fact that this describes the divine disposition; for although men think, perhaps, that it makes but little difference, if God only does what we ask, whether he does it from a direct, voluntary purpose, or whether it is the tendency of the divine mind previous to our petition, yet it does make a great deal of difference. We are accustomed to feel of men that they are better and nobler in whom resides the tendency of benevolence. Before we go to men, we assort them. We say of one, "Can we bring him to our purpose? Let me think. Where is he assailable? Where is his interest? Where is the weak point in his disposition? How may I, by this or that influence, win him to the consideration of my purpose, and so gain his assent?" Now it is worth while to gain a man's assent to a good work by any right means; but if you can make a man see the royalty of things that are right and good, and predispose him to them, is there no difference between that and getting his assent by some forceful method?

It makes, perhaps, but little difference to me whether a river is supplying Brooklyn with water, or whether it is supplied by a reservoir; but it does make a difference in respect to abundance and continuity. There is that old iron slave, the steam-engine—the only slave that you have a right to keep in bondage—and night and day it stands lifting, and lifting, and lifting the vast supplies of water, and pouring them over into the Ridgewood reservoir. I know that there will be enough; but when you are talking about endlessness, copiousness, what is this compared with that which I see every day under my chamber window, where the whole ocean sweeps in and out, and, night and day, without pump, or steam, or any like mechanical force, is always there, as it was before there was a man on these shores, and as it will be after the last man shall have died in future ages? The copiousness, the abundance of the ever-flowing ocean may fitly

represent the abundance of the divine thought, and mercy, and goodness; whereas most men think of God as one from whom favors are obtained, if at all, by what may almost be called *the pleading of prayer;* by the bringing to bear upon him influences which at last persuade him to grant the things asked for, so that when the persuasion stops the supply stops. Many seem to think that prayer is but an engine that lifts—abundantly lifts, it may be—blessings upon the heads of those that employ it; but that if the engine stops for a moment, the reservoir will run dry. No! it is the eternal disposition of God to be full of love, and mercy, and kindness, and he inspires in you those impulses which lead you to go and ask him for those things which you need. It is in his nature to supply our wants. This disposition it is that makes him the God he is. Without it, there would not be any God such as he.

Contrast this superabundance and lavishness of divine thought, and feeling, and conduct with the selfishness which characterizes the monarchic idea—the idea of God which the heathen used to entertain. They formed the best image that they could, doubtless; but, after all, the gods of the heathen were gods of selfishness—gods of passion. Mythology inspired a literature in which the heathen idea of God is associated with many philosophical, many ethical, and many moral thoughts, and it has undoubtedly leavened the mind of the whole world more than we are aware, so that some yet have a conception of Jehovah as a being who is of right selfish, because he is in might superior to all others. Many people to this day think that God may, without blame, do for his own glory what he chooses to do, and that, because we are weak, we have no right to plead, nor even to reason. And there seems at first to be some countenance for this idea in one of the arguments of Paul. But it is only seemingly so; for this idea of selfishness is foreign to the whole spirit of the New Testament, which represents God as the centre of infinite and inexhaustible benevolence.

Compare this great affluence and abundance of God's dis-

position with the stern conception that many have of a judicial God, measuring and apportioning his gifts by the desert or the effort of the receiver—a view that is derived largely from the realm of natural law, where it is supposed that the effects measure precisely the causes which are employed. It can not be doubted that there are many who believe that God is infinitely great and good to those who are able to approach him, but who have a consciousness of their own ill desert, which, together with their idea that God governs according to law, amounts to a feeling that the divine administration is so narrow and so strictly based on justice that God can not do much that is in accordance with the disposition which is set forth in our text. Compare this giving exceeding abundantly, above all that man can ask or think even in the moments when he is inspired with the Spirit of God, with that exact and frugal divinity which our fears, and doubts, and guilt place before the mind. We condition God. When we most need him, we are least able to go to him, often because we have the feeling that, though he has stores of bounty, he gives them according to special likings, or withholds them from prejudices such as we find among men. I might here employ the language which the apostle employed when speaking to his disciples: "Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels." We attribute to God the littleness of our disposition. We malign the grandeur, and glory, and affluence of his disposition.

Now this quality of the divine disposition is shadowed forth in God's natural government. The abundance of things throughout creation is one of the shadowings of the divine mind. If you go into a man's house, though you may not see him, you know something of him, and you know something of the woman who is the housekeeper. If you go into a painter's studio, and see what subjects he is moved to deal with, you see something of the man himself. If you go to a student's table, and see what topics he likes to think upon, you learn something of his nature. If you go into a dwelling, and

behold order, and neatness, and taste in arrangement, you see the disposition of the tenants indicated by these material things. If you see uncleanliness, untidiness, and disorder, you do not simply see filth and a want of order—you see a mind that was not pained by disorder and uncleanliness. If you see, on the other hand, beauty and attractiveness, you do not see these alone, but through them you perceive the mind that arranged them.

Years ago, when I traveled in the West, there were hotels there which they called *houses of entertainment.* There was a choice between these hotels and the barn, but it usually lay with the barn. I used to ride frequently several hours rather than to take the first that I met. I watched for houses with flowers in the window. For when I found a flower, I found a woman that loved flowers; and when I found a woman that loved flowers, I found a woman that had a natural element of refinement about her. There was something beautiful in her. The flower was not merely a flower to me—it was the sign of a person that had a certain kind of disposition.

When I look into nature, I see—what? Not sticks, stones, flowers, trees—I see him that made them. I see things that were created by Jesus Christ. When I look upon the heavens of the natural world, I behold him who made the natural world. If I see frugality, narrowness of compass, want of variety, I am not mistaken as to the disposition of the creator; but if, on the other hand, I find abundance, superabundance, endless change and endless variety, I can not be mistaken as to their meaning.

In the revelations of nature, then, we see God's disposition. We see his housekeeping. These are his gardens; these are his fields; this is his coloring—his frescoing; these are his seasons; and I can, from these elements in nature, infer his disposition, as much as I can infer a man's disposition from those things which go to make up his housekeeping. What is their language? Do they not corroborate the declaration of our text? Is he not a God that does exceeding abundantly beyond what we ask or think?

Variety is another term for abundance. From the infinite variety that abounds throughout nature, one would think that God never wanted to have two things to be alike. One would think that the problem of creation was to see how near things could be alike, and yet be separated by differences in species and individuals. An endless diversity, that tends to endless unity, is the characteristic of creation.

Abundance by continuity and succession is another of these hints; for every thing which takes place in nature occurs in such a way as constantly to link it with something that is to come. There is a tendency in nature to reproduce and continue, so that there shall not only be great variety and great abundance at any one time, but greater variety and greater abundance in time to come.

Abundance by increase affords an illustration of the divine nature. Men say, "We get just according to what we do." They suppose that the effect which we gain from natural laws is measured by the cause which we employ. It is not true. I plant a single kernel of Indian corn, and I gain from that kernel a stalk with two or three ears, and not less than a hundred kernels on each ear. I plant one kernel, and get three hundred. Is there any proportion between what I do and what I get? The seedsman goes forth, sowing not one seed, but many seeds. He, taking them, and scarcely knowing their nature, gives them to the furrow, and they germinate, and the earth nurses them in its bosom, and persuades them to come forth, and the wind searches for them, and the dews and rains hunt them, and all warming and stimulating influences begin to play upon them, and they give back not according to what the sower gave to the earth, not according to the power which he has exerted upon them, but according to that nature which God has infused into the material creation; and therefore they give abundantly beyond what the sower did, and beyond what he had reason to expect before he had experience of God's bounty.

On my summer nook stands a venerable apple-tree, proba-

bly a hundred and fifty years old. It has now lost much of its hair. It is dead and bald at the top. I let it stand because it is a sentinel of ages. It has buried generation upon generation. It heard the old Revolutionary cannon; balls fell not far from its foot. For probably a hundred years it has borne its annual crop of apples, and a great abundance of them. There was a time when a boy, eating an apple, took from his mouth a seed, and snapped it, and it fell into the grass, and the rain worked it into the soil, and the soil coaxed it to grow. That little seed of an apple, not so large as your finger-nail, struck down its root, and lifted up its trunk, which has stood the greater part of two centuries, and produced a thousand bushels of fruit and myriads of seeds.

Now, is God's nature indicated by this? Yes, because the way God makes the natural world act indicates how he thinks. It indicates what his thoughts and tendencies are, and these mark his disposition. The prodigality of nature; the immensity of those agents which are at work in the natural world; the vast circuits and quantities of heat and light, which are as much material streams as rivers are, which have poured from the bosom of the sun since the world began without any appreciable diminution, and which have filled space far beyond the most expert calculator's measuring—what do these peculiarities indicate but that problem deepest, most mysterious, and most august and precious—the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, the infiniteness of the love of God in Christ Jesus? Who shall measure or know what is the kindness of the divine heart?

There are some things about which we may be in danger of exaggeration and excess; but if we attempt, by analogies and illustrations, to appreciate the scope and quantity of that which is in itself infinite, it is not possible to exaggerate. When the question is as to the absolute nature of infinity, it is not possible that there shall be an approximation to the truth, still less exaggeration.

A child goes with a cup to the side of the ocean, and ladles

out the water cupful by cupful, and puts it in his mimic lake; and the thought of the child is that he will measure the water in the ocean, and see how much there is. How much chance is there that he will accomplish what he undertakes? He may dip out water from the ocean till he has grown to his manhood, and there will be no less there than when he began, and the task which he has undertaken will be no nearer its completion. We stand by the side of an infinite God, and attempt to measure infinity by methods that are more inadequate than that of the child who attempts to measure the quantity of water in the ocean with a cup.

All these views have been more or less corroborated by Christian experience. This infinite abundance, transcending our expectations, our requests, yea, even, if it might be so said, our ideals of our own wants—this we have made proof of ourselves; and among the richest and ripest benefits that come from Christian communion, from the interchange of Christian experience, is this corroboration which we gain one with another of the true nature of divine beneficence and divine goodness.

I will not dwell upon God's providential bounties, whose flow is incalculable; yet there are hours, I think, to every reflective mind, when there rises up such a sense of the greatness of the way in which God has led him through life that he is overwhelmed, and it seems as though there was concentrated upon him a greater amount of thought and feeling than it is possible for the imagination to conceive. Would that we had a more frequent sense of God's bounty! I do not mean a sense of divine providential mercies merely, but a retrospect of man's individual life; of the way God has dealt with him; of the way in which the divine Spirit has entered into the business of his life; of the sparing mercies of God; of the dangers unseen and suddenly disclosed from which he has been rescued; of sicknesses of which he has been healed; of losses which have not been his destruction; of temptations which threatened to overcome him, but which,

after all, were vanquished. These things, and ten thousand others that every reflective man must remember, and more that he can not recall, can not fail, it seems to me, to give any just man a sense of God's exceeding abundant goodness beyond asking and beyond thought.

If any one has reared children, and inducted them safely into manhood in the midst of the dangers that multiplied about them, and the troubles that beset them, and the temptations that surrounded them, and the liabilities to evil that contested their way, he must be strangely insensible, in looking back upon his household, if he be not overwhelmed with a sense of the multitudinousness of God's mercies. I think that there is nothing in this world that one, in founding a family, should be more thankful for than the successful establishment of children in it, from youth to ripe and virtuous manhood. A man may do many things in this world that are deserving of praise, but there are few things that he can do that are more deserving of praise than, dying, to leave his name with a family of children who shall more than fill his place, and who shall maintain virtue, and intelligence, and good habits throughout their lives.

For what a perilous navigation it is! How many corrupt influences are at work on the soul! How many evils there are in society that tend to pull men down and destroy them! How many perish by the way! Where the household has successfully accomplished its voyage, there are few things for which there ought to be more profound gratitude or a deeper sense of God's exceeding abundant goodness.

How much have you accomplished, with how little effort, for the general work of Christ in this world? Consider how slender your faith has been. If there are any within the sound of my voice who have loved the kingdom of Christ, and desired to be laborers in it, think how little you have done, and how much has been done through you. Compare the exertion that you have put forth with what has been wrought through your instrumentality. Consider your ir-

resoluteness, and faithlessness, and want of continuity. See how much God has given you for so small an outlay on your part. I do not think that any body who compares the little that he has done with the fruit that has followed his working can fail to realize God's abundant goodness to him.

Remember the way of prayer. How often have we gone to the throne of grace asking and seeming not to receive! When we look, in the time of struggle, at our prayers, often our faith is invalidated; but when we look upon the whole of our life and judge of prayer, not specially, but generically —when we wait, giving it time for fulfillment, and working with our prayers, I think that every true Christian man is convinced, sooner or later, that God has given him a harvest in answer to his prayers which he had no reason to expect. No man can look upon what he brings to the work, and what the work becomes in his hand, without being humbled in view of his own weakness, nor I trust, also, without being filled with admiration and reverence for that loving Heart that does exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think.

If these views and experiences are correct, there is every encouragement for men to ask in prayer for what they need. Among men, the imputation of discreditable qualities is one of the hardest things to be borne. If you are honest, you can not bear even the suspicion that you may be dishonest. It galls you to have it taken for granted that you can not stand temptation. "Of course you are honest; but still we might as well have this little matter put in black and white, because it is business." Such an implication that you are dishonest is more offensive than if a man should say "you are a thief." If you are true, and a man treats you as though you were not—if you are to be relied upon and trusted, and men treat you as though you were not, there can be no greater cause of offense to your experience.

Now how have you been dealing with this God who has dealt with you on this pattern of doing exceeding abundantly more than you asked or thought? You have treated him

on the assumption that he was penurious, and willing to give only on terms that were strict and severe. And how do you suppose our treatment of the loving God must smite on his bosom? The constant assumption that God is not good is one of the crimes and sins of human life.

Many men seem to shrink from prayer as though it were a matter of doubt whether *they* could pray. They would pray, but they do not feel that they are worthy to. Who ever was? There never was a worthy prayer. Never did a man receive a gift of God that was deserved. Never was there a divine gift that was not a mercy. A mercy is a gift to one who does not deserve it; and yet men are held aloof from prayer by the false notion that God's mercies are hindered by their unworthiness, as though he had not declared himself to be one that gives beyond their asking and beyond their thought. He will not measure you, and give you less than you expected. He does not determine from your character and desert what he shall give. He expressly declares that, and he tells us to act in the same manner. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." These testify to his love. Alas! that he should need such witnesses as these! When men no longer witness for him, the clouds and the daily recurring sun are his witnesses.

God, then, does not limit himself by the desert of those to whom he gives mercies, but takes his patterns from the largeness and generosity of his own nature. He pleases himself by giving.

Why, when this great organ sounds, it does not sound according to the size of your ear, but according to the size of its own pipes. Its harmony does not depend upon your ability to appreciate it, but upon the vastness and complexity of its own stops. So our God sits in heaven with infinite resources and power, and does, not according to our thought, but exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think.

There is every encouragement, also, for men to labor in the

cause of Christ among their fellow-men. I know that men are deterred from laboring in that cause by a sense of their inefficiency, and of the magnitude of the resistance which they will find in human nature—in the passions that are ever at work in man's life. It is true that there are resistances; it is true that there are enemies and animosities; it is true that we work fitfully, and unwisely, and circuitously often, instead of directly; but that which gives us confidence in our labor is the assurance that it shall not be in vain in the Lord. We are working under the influence of great divine decrees. The greatness of God's gifts are not to be measured by our wisdom; but we are workers together with God, and our work is affected by the influence of the divine disposition, and its results are according to the measure of his working.

A child sits in a little skiff on the Mississippi River when it is swollen by a freshet, and plies the oar, and glides swiftly on his course; and as he looks upon the banks and sees them fly rapidly past him, he fondly thinks that it is he that is making such headway. He is doing something toward it; but if he wants to know how much, let him turn his skiff around and try to row up stream. What gives him his speed? The dip of his oar? a little of it. But the vast sweep of the Mississippi current is that which makes the dip of his oar so like an eagle's wing for speed.

We are borne down the stream of time by an irresistible divine power; and though we are weak, and ignorant, and unskilled, and though our efforts are intermittent, we are under a divine constitution by which abundantly more will come from our labor than we have reason to think.

Ah! when the apples are ripe, a child's foot against the tree will bring scores and scores of them to the ground. He might take his little stick and throw it twenty times, and not hit more than a single apple; for he would be working according to his own skill, and would accomplish but little; but when he strikes the trunk of the tree, dozens of apples have been waiting for that, and they drop at his feet, and he

gets twenty times as many as he would do by plying his stick merely.

Now in every part of life God has fruit ready to drop into your lap; and the abundance that you get is not to be measured by the skill with which you can throw, but by that divine nature which does exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think.

Are you discouraged because the work seems difficult, because the nature that you are trying to train seems cross-grained and gnarled? Are you discouraged because the soil on which you are laboring is like sand, that gives back nothing for the culture you give it? Remember, though there are these special discouragements and difficulties by the way, that the great encouragement and the great hope is God. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" "be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end."

I feel to-day as though this subject might be brought home to us. It will be twenty years in October since I became the pastor of this church, and when I look back, I can not but remember those days of early meetings and of struggle for life which we passed through. Brethren, ye who wrought here in the foundations of this enterprise, do not you remember how you did not dare to look out of to-day into to-morrow? The clouds were so thick that you could not see through them, and the only way was to go on from day to day, trusting to Providence for the result. How small, how almost penurious was the beginning! How feeble were the instruments! How long was the way! And yet now look back through twenty years, and see what this Church has been permitted to do. Think how many are in it, and how many have been in it, living in the faith of God abundant Christian lives. Measure your own growth in grace and increase in knowledge. I see whole families here now in Christ Jesus and in the visible Church, not one of whom were Christians when I came here. Consider that the membership of this

Church is gathered from so many quarters, with such diverse influences and natural repugnances. Was ever a Church made up of so many denominations, and yet with such entire and mutual confidence? Has not the Spirit of Christ been stronger in your midst than the spirit of sect? Was there ever a Church that had a more precious record in heaven? The names that we remember, the names that we hang in our calendar, are like the stars indeed, pure and ever-shining, and brighter as the night draws near. God has given us these things.

And how much work have you been permitted to do in the nation—yea, and across the sea! There is scarcely a Church of Christ, I suppose, in Protestant Christendom, in which the name of Plymouth Church is not known. And God hath wrought it, to the honor and praise of his own great name, working in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Now, with this long record, stored so wonderfully with God's abundant goodness, what shall be the future? Will you go out of the past, which was like a Garden of Eden, into a future that shall be like a howling wilderness? Will not the God of the past be your God? Now, with augmented opportunities, should we be less useful, and not more? Should enterprise falter? Should we drop our hands in the midst of the battle, or should we again renew our allegiance of fidelity and faith to him who does exceeding abundantly more than we can ask or think, and go forward and labor to the end?

God grant that you may drop down in the harness. God give you the privilege of working to the last moment. And may your words be now words of cheer and duty in the field, and by-and-by words of victory and glory in the heavens.

XX.

The Rich Fool.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath evening, March 22d, 1868.

The Rich Fool.

"And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."—Luke, xii., 16–21.

There is great diversity in the parables of our Savior. Some of them are scarcely more than maxims. Some of them are sketches of pictures. Some of them are more elaborate, almost as much so as a history. This, although brief, is one of the most symmetrical, full of instruction in every member. Its point scarcely can be mistaken. There are no possessions more legitimately obtained, ordinarily, than those which come by husbandry. Here was a rich man whose possessions consisted of lands, and the product of lands. Already he was rich; but, as is wont to be the case, riches bred riches. His wealth was increasing. There was peculiar pertinence in selecting such an example. Otherwheres, and in other ways, wrongly-obtained riches are animadverted upon; but the lesson of this parable depends upon the fact that the man was pursuing an honorable calling; that he was obtaining from an honorable calling justifiable wealth.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself—"

What an empire is this *thinking within one's self!* The sphere of thought is the sphere of true liberty! We can not

walk where we please, but we can think as we please. We can not act as we choose. Customs restrain like walls. A man is obliged to limit his conduct, but every man possesses an interior liberty. Outwardly he can not spread his wings like a bird and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, but inwardly he can fly as he pleases. There is, too, a vast difference between what a man does and says, and what he thinks within himself. Oh, how many thefts a man thinks within himself! How many base jealousies! How many stupid ambitions! How many disallowable pleasures a man dallies with in his thoughts! What excursions of the imagination; what wondrous creations of this architect of thought; what a realm, wider than the scope of the heavens, broader than from horizon to horizon; what an illimitable realm is that which a man's silent thoughts traverse, and traverse so easily that there is no sound in their going, and so suddenly that there is no time occupied in their passage! The vast circuit of this immeasurable globe man passes easily, leaving no footfall, making no track, always finding new paths.

"And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

Men's thoughts within themselves are apt to be anxious and uneasy. First they think, "What shall I do to get riches?" Then, when they possess them, they begin anxiously to think, "What shall I do with riches?" Care in getting, care in investing, care in increasing, care in defending—riches and cares go together! And so a man that makes himself a servant of wealth is a slave from beginning to end.

"What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

This is all, it seems, that God's great goodness to him led him to think of. God had made the heavens to be to him as a bountiful bosom to the child. God made the seasons to be his servants, inspired the earth to be productive, maintained his reason, and all his active and executive skill. For all these there was no grateful thought. He did not think with-

in himself, "Blessed be the name of God, from whose hand comes all wealth." He did not think within himself, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" No, still groping avariciously and selfishly, he says, "What shall I do with all my possessions?"

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

I will hoard—not spend; not lend; not distribute; not scatter abroad. I will hoard—that was his thought.

Now the mere increase of warehouses, and barns, and granaries to meet the increasing husbandry is not in itself wrong. It may be a part of the administration of consummate prudence. The thing itself is not a thing to be reprobated, yet it was in this case most wicked. The sin was not in the mere act, but in the spirit that directed it; for the spirit of the man was one of entire ingratitude toward God. If there had been no God, he could not have been more absolutely left out from his thought.

There was the want, also, of any proper consideration of the ends and uses of abundance; for though a man has a primary right to so much of that which he earns as shall sustain his own body and his household, he is also a debtor to those that are poorer than he. Were there none such about him? no needy relatives? no unfortunate neighbors? no helpless mother with orphan children struggling against the face of a hard poverty? no strangers? no friendless youths that needed a helping hand? Here sat this man in the midst of his increasing abundance, growing rich and richer, and his thought was, "What shall I do with it?" He heard no sighs. He saw no tears. He felt no humanity. "This will I do," he said; "I will build bigger barns. I will increase my store of useless wealth." He had already more than he wanted or could use for himself. He had to pile it higher and still store it away. And it is as useless to put away property that you can not use as it is to have gold in the bowels of the mount-

ains of California. Of what use to a banker or broker is undug gold? And of what use to a man is property if he does not know how to use it?

As you will observe, there was a certain royal conceit in the whole of this personage of the parable.

"This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods."

Does it not recall another passage?

"The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

Now the king was as big a fool as if he had been this fool of the parable. Oh the arrogance, the towering conceit, which comes with success in life! How men are puffed up! How they think, because prosperity has blown to them, that they are more than other men! How censorious they grow! How they love to praise their own shrewdness by despising some other men's blundering! How they like to point men to their own frugality by pointing to other men's wasteful habits. "Ah!" they say, "every thing which he touches fails;" and the echo of that is, "Every thing that I touch succeeds." Some men seem to be critics of others, whereas they are flattering painters of their own portraits.

But this is not the worst.

"There will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

In the first place, the whole ambition of this man was concentrated upon himself. He had not a thought outside of himself. The end of his living, the end of the property which was intrusted to him, the supreme end of the administration of all the effects in his hands, was this—*my own personal good.* There was not one drop spilled over. There was no thought of others.

But this man said, looking at more than he could use, and seeing the fresh-coming harvest, "All is for me." "I" was his

god. He was a supreme egotist, and a most selfish worshiper of himself.

But then, even that seems to me less remarkable than this extraordinary address to his soul.

"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

Do you suppose that a man can feed his soul in that way? Can a soul be fed with silver or gold? Can a soul be made merry because outward goods increase? How beggarly the conception! How stultified the man appears by this very address to himself! He proposed to feed that which was divine with that which was essentially animal. He had no holy thoughts; no merciful inclinations; he had no chastened and purified aspirations; he had no sweet and loving affections; he had nothing that was glorious in holiness or beautiful in any wise. But, "Oh my soul," said he, "take thine ease." How many men there are that try to quiet their souls! How many men there are that say to their uneasiness, "Why art thou disquieted within me, O my soul? Art thou not rich?" A man's soul rich because his pocket is rich? How many men say, "Oh soul, what wilt thou? What have I not done for thee? Look abroad and behold the fields. They are all thine. Look upon all these harvests. They are thine. Glance up the mountain side, and measure all the stately trees thereon. All these things are thine; and all these mansions; and all these titles and bonds; and all this silver and gold." And the poor smothered soul says, "I will have none of them." The soul—has it a mouth? Can it eat, as a man's body can? The soul—is it a broker and exchanger of money? Does it love to hear the clink of gold and silver? Is that the soul?

This man of the parable has not committed a crime; he has not committed any unvirtuous action; as you will take notice, he was a husbandman without apparent blemish or dishonesty, acquiring property by legitimate means. But—mark the point of admonition. He does it without gratitude to God or humanity to his fellow-men. And he attempts to

feed his soul with these outward things, and does not know that the soul must have something other and better than these wherewithal to feed.

"But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Do you take notice how in the light of imagination are contrasted here a man's convictions and thoughts respecting himself, and God's thoughts about him? Was there a single man that lived within a day's journey of this man that did not praise him? Was this man's name ever mentioned in all the region round about but that men said, "Ah! one of the richest and most honorable men in the community?" When men were speaking of prosperity and thrift, was not he spoken of? Were there not pleasing titles addressed to him when men would gain his friendship? Did not the man weave his own title out of these expressions of men's thoughts respecting him? If you had asked him, What is thy name? he would have said, My name is *The rich man.* What is thy name? *Prince among my fellows.* What is thy name? *The abounding man; The prosperous man; The eminent man; The great man of the neighborhood; The much-talked-of man.* What is his name, O Lord? *Fool.* He knew every name but the right one. The probability is that no man had ever addressed him by his true title. He had been called by the name of his childhood; but that was not his name. He had been called by names bred of wealth; but these were not his names. He had been called by names that came from men's flatteries; but these were not his true names. When God spoke to him out of eternal truth, he said to him, "Thou fool!" and that was his name. It is very strange that a man should live to be forty or fifty years of age and not know his own name. Oh, how many men there are in this congregation who have not the slightest conception of their nature and name. If I were to call out "Fool, come hither," who of you would stir? But when God comes to call men, by-

and-by, with that irresistible voice, "Fool," oh my soul, is it thou that then wilt be obliged to hear and answer? Are there not many of you that walk in honor, and are girded about with praise, who, if God were to launch your title through the air and fix it quivering in you, would be obliged hereafter, by this strange baptism of God, to wear the name "Fool?"

What a contrast there was between the apparent and the real position in which this man stood! We read in the Bible of men's walking in a vain show. We read the exclamation of him of old, "How are they cast down, as in a moment!" Here was a man in the very focus of prosperity, and yet he stood within a hand's-breadth of his own grave. He seemed to defend himself from the intrusion of misfortune, and yet he was soon to be cast down. He had all that men usually covet. He had wrapped himself round and round with many coverings of wool, and silk, and fine linen, and supplied himself with abundant stores of things pleasant to the eye, and of things pleasant to the palate, and was honored and respected; and now, having accomplished the purposes of his life, he began to lay himself back, as it were, and to say to himself, "Now the toil is over; now the accomplishment is reached; now take thine ease." And what sort of an ease was it? "Eat, drink, and be merry." Self-indulgence and lust, which is the end and outcome of very much of the prosperity of this world. Self-indulgent pampering, selfish luxury—this was it. And he seemed to himself, he seemed to men, to have reached the very climax at the very moment the hand of God was extended to smite him down utterly and forever.

"Then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?"

Men do not think of that. "It is mine" occupies the whole hemisphere of men's thoughts. There are very few that look beyond. There are very few that have the courage faithfully and truly to trace out what shall become of their posses-

sions hereafter, that they have so carefully amassed, for which they have sacrificed so much of duty, for which often they have sold themselves. All this man's estate should be scattered. It should no more be gathered under one name. The implication is that it would be squandered. Some commentators think that that night he should be set upon by robbers, his life destroyed, and his treasures taken.

Consider, next, Christ's most searching application. "So is he"—that is, so is every one—"that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

What means this *so?* Just as great a fool as this poor rich fool, just as absurd as he was in the sight of angels and of God, and just as imperiled.

It does not require, then, that a man should be a criminal in order to destroy himself. Nay, it does not require that a man should be immoral, nor that he should acquire his possessions by avaricious wrong-doing. A man may never vary from the truth, may never do a dishonest deed; he may follow a calling that is perfectly allowable; he may amass riches legitimately; he may stand in the midst of those riches, and no man may be able to lay at his door a single charge; not one may be able to say to him, "Thou hast defrauded me;" not one may be able to show him a crooked place in the line that his life has drawn; he may be approved before men; and yet God may say to him, "Thou fool!" Why? Simply because he has made himself rich? No! But because he is rich only toward himself; he is not rich toward God.

Why, is not that the life of the animal, to be rich toward himself? Is not the browsing ox rich toward himself? Sleek and fat is he, but in what other direction is he rich? What does the ox think? He does not think—he browses. What do the swine think? They do not think—they eat. What does the bird of prey think? Nothing—he hungers and searches for prey. But man was meant to be a creature of thought, and of imagination, and of moral feeling, and of a

character that is to prepare him for converse with God and angels in the other sphere; and a man that spends all his moral forces making himself rich in this life, and not rich toward God, is he not a fool, and bankrupt? The richer he is, the more bankrupt he is. Are there not many persons here who are rich in industry? But what hast thou toward God? what thoughts? what obedience? what love? what gratitude? what complacency? What is God to thy soul? Are there not many men who are rich in morality, walking circumspectly, with clean hands, and placing their feet in a right place withal? And yet, what do they lack? But a little? Oh moral man, you have taken care of your head, your eye, your ear. Every sense has been cared for. You have taken care of your body—dear, dainty body! You have solaced it with linen, and woolen, and silk. You have taken care of that precious stomach of thine by riches, by dainties and delicacies. Thy stomach shall not rise up in judgment against thee. Bountiful hast thou been as a master to that. But there is immortality beyond this veil. There is a soul that can not die. What hast thou done for that soul? Oh moral man, thou art to live in the presence of God. Where is thy title, and where are thy tastes? Thou art to speak another language than that of men upon earth. Speak now some sentences of the heavenly tongue. Thou art to be brighter than the stars if thy destiny be fulfilled, but where are the signs and tokens of it? Ten years since thy majority—twenty years—thirty adult years, and all spent in pampering that which goes down to dust! Your bones do not inherit immortality. Flesh and blood shall not enter the kingdom of God. Holy thoughts and the power of thinking them, heavenly aspirations and the power of realizing them—it is these things that belong to God's kingdom. It is these that can not die and that the world can not touch.

Thou hast been rich toward thy lower self, but thou hast not been rich toward God. Of all dreamy speculations, of all unreal things, of all things that seem like the last vanish-

ing vapor of the sky, like the last lingering light of the evening, God has seemed to you the most mystic and remote, the most ineffable and impalpable, the most unreal; and yet God is the great reality of time and eternity, the only absolute something. All your thought-power, and time, and strength have been squandered on the unsubstantial—the *real*, as you call it. All your time has been wasted in impoverishing your true self.

I do not reprobate enterprise; I do not reprobate blameless riches; but all things are in vain in which God has no partnership. No man can do business alone in this world and be safe. If you love, it is God and you that should love. If you aspire to power, it should be God and ambition in you that should work together. If you build riches, take care; there must be in the firm one other name—God. His will must be in you, working in all things, or all your work is vain.

Consider, in the light of this instructive parable, the perils that lie hidden in every man's life. We know them occasionally, because they break out before us. And yet here is, as it were, a comprehensive and generic instruction, more striking because it is pictorial. This man stood in the midst of apparent life and health. There were no signs of danger in the heaven; there were none upon the earth; there were no signs in his body; he was full of cheer and happiness. He was congratulating himself. He tossed off his wine. He could not refrain himself. "Oh soul, happy soul, how fortunate to come into the possession of such a man as I am! Oh happy soul, eat, drink, and be merry." And he said this in the face of the ghostliest death, that grinned close to his red cheek. He could not see him. He could not feel the breath of his coming. There was no mildew in the air. And yet this man stood side by side with the tomb. Death was his nearest neighbor. Death was his sure companion. At the very moment when he was congratulating his soul on its abounding future, Death had already laid his hand upon him. "This night! *this night!*" said God.

What a translation out of the arrogance of wealth, out of the supremacy of selfishness, out of multiplied resources that had been perverted to the pampering of his own lower nature, while he forgot God, and did not care for his fellowmen! To be thus taken in an instant, unthinking and unprepared, into the presence of his God—what a change it was! And yet, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee."

Ah! my friends, his was not the only hidden peril. There is a hidden peril for every one of us. In the garden, and behind the rose it lurks; in the orchard, and behind the redolent bough; in the picture, while yet the artist's brush is laying on the pigment; in all your building, while the trowel is ringing upon the uprising wall; in all your digging, whether in the furrow or in the garden; in the erection of more ample warehouses and stores for the keeping of your goods —in all these there is peril.

There is not far from youth that hidden certainty of death. I am speaking to some that I shall never speak to again. You are marked. You are going away, and my eye shall never rest on you again. There are some of you now within a handbreadth of the grave, and yet it doth not appear who it is. If I were to say that some sharp-shooter, hidden, would launch the fated bullet into the midst of this assembly, with what terror would the whole of you rise! and yet Death stands with bow drawn back to the uttermost, and that arrow is just on the string that will speed to some of you. You seem strong to-day. To-morrow you shall be weak. You seem to-day to be honorable. Ere long eclipse is coming upon your fair name. You seem to be reveling in pleasures disallowed; but God marks you. You think that you are hidden from the eye of God because you are hidden from the eye of man, but it is a delusion. God's eye is ever on you, and your tomb is close by you. There is no contrast more awful to thoughful men, and no infatuation more striking, than that which exists between the reality of a man's condition and that man's own thought of his condition.

If God should call you in a single night, and if it should

be this night, tell me, are you prepared to make your final account? Are you prepared to leave things in this world just as they are, with no more done? Are you prepared to leave things undone as they are? Is there no justice that you owe? Have you filled up the measure of bounty? Is there no reparation to be made any where, and no restoration? Is there nothing to be repented of? Is there no half-fulfilled duty of love? Are there no words to be recalled? Is there no quarrel to be reconciled? Is there no cleansing of the heart of vile thoughts, of wrong dispositions, or of base passions and appetites? Are you clean as one that emerges from the stream bathed and purified? Would your soul rise up out of your body unsullied if to-night God should call it? Are you prepared to meet your Judge, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Is there no taint, no sully, no selfishness, no cruelty of pride, no self-indulgence, no frivolity of vanity, no waste of conscience, no death-poison? How is it with you? If God should call your soul to-night, are you prepared to meet him? Is it not just as our Savior made it to be in the parable? Are not men living in a vain show, not a handbreadth from death, though they seem to themselves to be far from it and secure?

Call up again that point of the parable in which the man is represented as addressing his soul. Is there any thing in this world that is more painful than the efforts of men after happiness? When you yourself look out upon your neighbors, are you not a just critic of the foolishness of men in the ways in which they attempt to secure happiness? and yet, are you not substantially in the same way yourself?

My friends, there is a hunger of the body. We feed that with bread and with meat. But men seem not to have learned yet how to feed that hunger of the soul which breaks out in discontent, in repinings, in complainings sometimes; which breaks out more often in aspirations and yearnings, if one be of a noble turn of mind; which manifests itself never so strikingly as in that way. For, as you can not take a forest flower, and hold it up to the sun to make it more beauti-

ful, but it casts a shadow on the ground by the very light which makes it bright, so, in mortal experience, there is no pleasure that does not trail after it a shadow; there is no experience by which a man attempts to satisfy his soul that does not leave behind a certain bitterness. And what is that but the soul saying "I am not content; I am not satisfied?" There are joys that satisfy. Of them Christ spoke. Drink of the sweetest water, and of the coolest that gushes from the side of the cool rock, and you will thirst again; but, says Christ, "He that taketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." You will hunger if you feed from the loaf; but Christ says, "I am the bread of life. He that cometh to me shall never hunger again."

Oh, my friends, go with me in imagination along the streets of New York. Let us, as if we were touched with the divine wisdom, as if we were companions of God, walk the ways of greatness. There stand two giants, one with overt might, and the other with secret and covert cunning, matching themselves before men, and shaking the market with their footsteps, and bringing on themselves the eyes of all. Which shall have the mastery in the great battle of riches? All the market stands back to see the fight of the giants. One shall count his money by millions and millions, and the other's money is uncountable. No man knows the depths of their exchequers and coffers; and ten thousand there are looking with greedy admiration upon the one and upon the other. Oh God, who are they? With phosphoric light I see standing over their portals the divine hand-writing, "Fool! fool!" And God says to them, "In a year or two whose shall all these things be?"

I see men that attract to themselves the eyes of all the crowd. What equipage could be more resplendent? They have gathered around themselves that which seems to consummate their felicity upon earth. They roll over the pavement, and roll through the park. They are found upon courses where all men do congregate for admiration of such things. They are at the climax of exhilaration and enjoy-

ment. "Oh happy man!" men cry out. No returning echo comes, "Happy man;" but muffled, almost silent, comes back from the heavens, "Fool! fool!"

I look upon newly wedded love. It is the dew of heaven that has fallen upon young flowers. If it knows how to rise up from out of the senses, and to frame itself into divine loving; if it knows how to draw its pictures upon the background of eternity; and if it twines itself round and round the bosom and the heart of God, oh, this is soul-feeding love. But if to each the other is an idol; if each extracts from the other but an earthly love; if there is no other foundation than that which stands under mortal experience, then, while we look upon them, and congratulate them, and say, "Oh happy lovers!" God's voice suddenly distills through the air and says, "Fools! fools!"

Mother, if that child in thine arms is God's child, and if through that child, as through a lens, thou art looking at immortality and glory, blessed be thou of women; but if this child of thine is only a mortal child, an idol indeed, and in it thou seest only this world, oh fool!

Young man, with health and strength, with ambition and opportunity, if these take hold upon glory and immortality, oh, wise art thou; but if they stop this side of that, oh, fool art thou. It is a sad thing to have a price put into a man's hands to get wisdom, and to squander it. Oh, it is a sad thing to be built for God, and end only with the dust which shall cover you. It is a sad thing for one to be brought up under the sound of the Gospel, to know his own necessities, to hear the truth of God sounding in his conscience, to be touched in his heart again and again; it is a sad thing for a man to see all the truth that gleams through the horizon of the Gospel, and after all to die as the fool dieth. "So is every one that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

When I was a lad, the old bell in the belfry used to ring a knell the sound of which I could not get out of my head for a month after hearing it. A young companion of mine died

when I was absent at school, and I came back on the day of his funeral and heard that bell toll. And what tolling that was of the old New England belfries! How the sound reverberated, and rocked and rolled, and clung to the air, as if it never would die out! How that old bell filled the whole air full, ringing and ringing out the solemn tidings of mortality!

Oh that there might be some ringings from out of the belfry of God's heart that should fill the whole air of our thoughts and feelings in the same way! And if there be one stroke, if there be one bell whose tongue should more than another syllable to us lessons of instruction, it seems to me to be this: "So is every man that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

What are you laying up for God? Wherewithal are you rich toward God? "I am a Christian, I am a professor of religion," says one. So are many that shall say in that day, "Lord, thou hast taught in our streets. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence." And he shall say to them, "I never knew you." Beware lest, when you rise to go to your account, suddenly speeding through your wealth, breaking through your prosperity, coming out from the midst of your dissevered riches, and rising into the presence of God, he shall say to you, "I never knew you." Let love die here; let my name perish here; let my house pass to another; let my children wither as leaves upon a bough that has been plucked off; let my life be as him who dwelleth in a desert overblown with choking sands, if in that moment, when I stand in heaven, God shall say to me, "Enter; thou art welcome." In that one hour I shall reap more than compensation for all. But, though my house be builded of gold and silver, and my head crowned with chaplets of roses, and all sweet delights wait on my feet, and my life be one long-rolling symphony of joy, that one word, "Depart! I know you not," will overmaster and storm out of the memory the whole of this joy. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

XXI.

Jacob's Ladder.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Sabbath morning, April 5th, 1868.

Jacob's Ladder.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed."—Genesis, xxviii., 10–13.

Before there was a written revelation—before temples and synagogues were built, Jacob lived. God taught men then, not through the priesthood, nor through an accumulated literature, but by nature, and through visions and dreams. God treated the infant race by such instruments of instruction as befitted their infancy. A few great truths had been accepted, but the exceeding riches of moral truth, and all the wealth of society wrought out by it, was as yet undeveloped and unsuspected. Even common morality had but feeble hold then. Good men, when pressed, easily fell, and without compunction, into sins which, if committed in our day, would discredit one's reputation forever. But there is much difference between sin now, with all the world interpreting rectitude, and sin in the early, infant day of the race, when very little had yet been found out.

Jacob, having quarreled with Esau, went forth, at parental suggestion, to seek his fortune. He was alone. All familiar scenes were left behind him. His heart must have had many a swell that day, as he ventured farther and farther into strange scenes. Every step set him wider apart from his

whole life's hopes. A rugged man, and accustomed to a shepherd's life, it was no hardship, when the sun was set, to seek his rest in the open air, upon the ground, and with no softer pillow than a stone. As hunger is said to be the best sauce for plain food, so fatigue will make stones seem soft as feathers. He had no reason to complain of that night's lodging. There are many bad men who sleep on down, but dream of purgatory; here was a good man sleeping on the ground, yet dreaming of heaven. It was the better fare; for Jacob saw a vision—a ladder standing on the ground, and reaching up to heaven. It need not have been a very long one for that, for heaven is not far from every good man. Then angels appeared, and ascended and descended along this ladder of the vision; but above them all, he beheld his father's God—Jehovah. In all the discoveries made to him, if his heart was homesick (and I take it that it was), there are no words that touched deeper than these: "I am the God of thy father."

Here, then, were three things to the old patriarch: a way set up between earth and heaven, making a visible connection between the ground on which he stood (or slept) and the sky; the free circulation along that way of great powers and ministering influences; and God, the supreme, inspiring, directing, rewarding, or punishing force, eminent over all. All these were included in the simple vision.

Consider what the vision must have meant to him, as he turned it over in his mind. He had just broken off from home. He that day had become his own master. The future was all to be made. Before him, in this exigency, arose a symbol which seemed to say, "Whatever plan you shall henceforth set up, though it begins upon the ground, let its top reach to the heaven. Though your undertakings base upon the earth, let them stretch out and up until they find a resting-place and a consummation above. Do nothing on earth that may not be known and felt in heaven."

Then, again, he saw *angels;* as if God, in the absence of

all the incitements to holiness which bless our lives, would, by a striking and unforgetable picture, impress upon him that there are other powers working for men besides their own; that right aims, pursued by right methods, carry along with them great moral influences, which, though invisible and not easily calculated, are God's very angels ministrant.

And, finally, Jehovah stood, the Father, the Guide, the Benefactor, saying, by no words, but by a vision yet more impressive, "I am thy God: thou art not alone. The whole world is mine; and though thou hast left thine earthly father, thou art not left of thy heavenly Father. Go forth. Angels attend thee. I will not leave thee nor forsake thee. Serve me, and I will serve thee."

Was not that a good outfit for a young man on the very eve of his opening life? Could any patrimony; could any patron; could any association or partnership; could any promise or realization, be worth as much to him, starting in life, as that faith in God, and in the angels of God, and in integrity in all human dealing? Was not the moral influence of such an experience worth more to him than lands, or flocks and herds, or silver and gold?

There comes a time when every young man or maiden must start out upon life. The seed that ripens upon the stalk must be shaken off, and be planted, and grow upon its own root. The scion is cut away from the parent branch and grafted upon another stalk. It is at the starting out in life that every one needs an inspiration, and will have it, either good or bad. It is just at this point that every one needs, in some way suited to his genius, his circumstances and condition, that there should happen to him substantially that which happened to Jacob; that in his vision (which may be upon his bed, or may be one of those waking visions which men have) there should be a ladder, which, touching the earth, connects it with the heaven; and a vision of God's angels passing between the Father and his earthly child.

Let me, then, in a few words, this morning, not so much

preach as talk with you of your visions; and I address myself mainly to the young—to those that are just entering upon life. Shall your ladder, standing on the earth, reach to heaven? or is your ladder, in its whole length, flat along the ground? Stop one moment, and think, you who have started out, or are about starting. By ladder I mean your plans in life. Are they, all of them, lying upon the ground, or, though they begin there, do they really go up, and consciously take hold of the future and of the spiritual? Man must not avoid the world. Every ladder should stand upon the ground. The ground is a very good place to start from, but a very poor place to stop on. No man can be a Christian by separating himself from his kind. No man can be a Christian by avoiding business; and if you transact business, it must be transacted in the accustomed ways. No man need seek, while in the body and on the ground, to get rid of physical things or physical laws. There is no saintship gained by a violation of those economics by which God designed to develop our virtues and our manhood. Every man, therefore, is to be a Christian; but, at the same time, he is to be a laboring man, a thinking man, a working man. Activity in earthly things is not inconsistent with true piety. A right industry, a right enterprise, and right ambitions in these, do not stand in the way of true religion. They not only perfectly harmonize with it, but they are indispensable to it. I can scarcely conceive of a lazy man being a Christian. Even the chronicles of those that have sought by retiring to caves, and thus separating themselves from human life, to live a Christian life, show that while they escaped from men, they did not escape from the temptations which sprang up through the passions of human nature. A human life, in its ordinary condition in Christian communities, is favorable (if one be wise to know how to employ it) to the production of morality, of virtue, and of true piety. A man's ladder, then, should stand on the ground. A man that is going to be a Christian should be a man among men—joined in interest with them,

sympathizing in their pursuits, active in daily duties; not above the enterprise, the thoughtfulness, and the proper amount of care that belong to worldly avocations. This is a part of the divine economy; and those that have the romantic notion of piety, that it is something that lifts them out of the way of and away from actual worldly cares, misconceive totally the methods of divine grace. But, while man's plans in this world should be secular, and adapted to the great laws of that physical condition in which we are born, they must not end where they begin. Woe be to him that uses the earth for the earth, or whose plans are wholly material, beginning and ending in secularity and materiality; who means by fortune—riches, and nothing else; who means by power—carnal, temporal power, and nothing else; whose pleasure consists in that which addresses itself to the senses, and in nothing else. Woe be to him who lays out a plan which has nothing in it but this world. At the very time when you plant your ladder on the ground, you must see to it that it is long enough to reach, and that it does reach, and rest its top in heaven. This world and the other must be consciously connected in every true man's life. This world is shallow. Our atmosphere is smotheringly near to us. There is no manhood possible that does not recognize an existence beyond our horizon, and that does not stretch itself up into the proportions, at least ideal, which belong to it as a creature of the Infinite. And even if one were to look only upon natural results and economic courses, he is best prepared for *this* life who considers this life to be made up of this life and of that which is to come. In every outstarting in life it is not enough that you propose to yourself to do well in this world—your "this world" must reach to the other.

Along every man's ladder should be seen God's good angels. You are not at liberty to execute a good plan with bad instruments. When you lay the course of your life out before you, and say to yourself that you propose to achieve in your mortal life such and such things, it is not a matter

of indifference to you how you achieve them. God's angels must ascend and descend on your ladder, otherwise other and worse angels will. When youth first opens, if it has been Christianly instructed, I think the impulses generally are noble and even romantic. Youth characteristically aspires to do things that are right, and to do them in a right manner. One of the earliest experiences is that of surprise and even horror at the world's ignoble ways, and the temporary withdrawal of the young soul from its first contacts with life. Its first comprehension of actual life, and of what must be done in the world, if one would succeed, violates its romantic notion of manly truthfulness, of straightforwardness, of honorable dealings. Almost all young men come up to that period of life at which they are to break away from home, and go out into the world, with the most generous purposes. They seem inspired by truth, honesty, fidelity, enterprise, generosity, honor, and even heroism. These all belong to youthful aspiration. They mean never to forsake these things. They mean to carry these qualities into their lives, and to live by them. Now these are God's good angels to you; not that there are none better; but it may be well said that these nobler incitements, and motives, and aspirations stand along the line of a young man's plans in life as so many angelic messengers by which he purposes to work out his ideal in life. Let every one who begins life, then, have a plan along which are clearly seen noble sentiments and convictions. I beseech of you, my young friends, not to listen to any man who tells you that it is a pity to be honest. I heard of a man but this week who said, "If my parents had only brought me up to be dishonest, I should have succeeded; but, unfortunately for me, they taught me to be honest, and I could never get over it, and every body in consequence has cheated me, and my life is not a success." A man wants something more than honesty, that's certain. There is one other quality that every body wants, and that is good sense, which this man evi-

dently lacked. That intellectual appareling, we conceive, precedes all other things. If a man has not got good sense, heaven help him! "What shall he do?" Do just as the man does who is born with only one foot—limp. "But can you not make up the lack of good sense?" Can you make up a deficient leg? "Are some men then born so?" Yes; and they have to crutch it all through life. But if a man were to take pattern as to gait and dignity of demeanor, would he imitate a cripple, or would he imitate a full-grown, handsome man? And if you are reasoning upon human life, will you take your ideal of what is most fitting and becoming in manhood from these cynics, these skeptics, these men that deride, these men of moral unfaith? No man is fit to be your model who has not those distinguishing qualities which separate manhood from the brute, and lift him far above them.

In laying down your plans in life, then, remember that no plan is fit for your achievement which you can not achieve by open, honest, clean, upright, Christian motives. You can not afford to succeed by any other course. Your ladder, though standing on the ground, should rest its top in heaven; and there should be angels constantly passing between the top and the bottom. It is bad enough to have a plan that begins on earth and stays on earth; but for a man having a good plan to consent to execute it from base sentiments or by base influences, is unpardonable. Your life will task and prove you. Do not, however, let it drive away from you those influences which overhung your childhood. Have they not already gone from some of you? Has not an enamel already formed over some of your tender feelings? Have not some of you boasted of forgetfulness? Have you not boasted that you no longer remembered or were influenced by those tender impulses? and that you have strengthened yourself against them? that you have devastated to some extent purity, delicacy, refinement, truth, honor, justice, and rectitude? Are you not already working down toward the animal conditions of life?

Do not, however, trust alone to those generous sentiments. Morality is not piety. In the vision of Jacob there was not alone the ladder between the earth and heaven, and the angels ascending and descending, but brightest, and best, and grandest, and behind all the angels, stood God, saying to him, "I am thy father's God." Now high above all a man's plans, high above all his heroic moral resolves, there is to be a living trust in God; and there is to be a soul-connection between ourselves or our business and our God. All our life long we must not be far from him. Piety must quicken morality; then life will be safe, and will be successful.

Here, then, is a general schedule of a right life: something to do that is right; a plan by which you shall execute a right life by right instruments; and over all, the benign, genial, stimulating influence of the heavenly Father. Business, morality, piety—these three should be coupled together. They are the trinity of influences from which every one should act, and it is transcendently important that young men should find this out before they find out any thing else. Blessed be that man who, going from his father's house, and lying down to sleep, though it be upon the ground, and though stones be under his head, sees a ladder between heaven and earth, typifying his future life, and on that ladder angels ascending and descending, and hears God saying to him, "I am thy God." That is an inspiration, on life's threshold, worth any man's aspiration.

Let me apply this a little more in detail:

I. There comes a time when the maiden departs from her father's house. She is called; she answers, and departs. Ah! how many visions of angels have there been; but they were not gods. How many have gone out walking on flowers a little way, but soon have found the flowers changed to thorns. How many have gone out from their father's house borne on the seraphic experience of love, scarcely touching the ground for joyfulness, to find, little by little, that love flowed away like a summer's brook, and left in its place but

the bare channel and the gravel. How many have gone out to pursue a fiction which perished faster than snow melts in the handling. And yet every maiden must go forth in her appointed time. Blessed are they who, thus going, in the very first day, behold, as it were, God's ladder between heaven and earth, and God's angels ascending and descending, and behind and above all, God himself! See to it, then, you that are going and you that are gone—see to it that your earliest plans in the married life, your first hopes, include a true love to God, and a true purpose of serving him. It is not enough that you love your husband. He is your head, in the Lord. He stands for the hour, as it were, interpreting to you God's love; but he is not God. Otherwise your ladder will be upon the ground, too short to reach farther than the storm-cloud, and ere long the winds will blow it over. Of all the sad things in this world, I think the saddest is the leaf that tells what love meant to be—and the turning of the leaf, to tell what love has been; one all blossoms, the other all ashes; one all smiles and gladness, the other tears and sadness. Nothing is so beautiful as the temple that love builds; nothing is so miserable as the service of that temple, if God be not in it.

My young maiden friend, love is not a passion, but a growth. The heart is a lamp, with just oil enough to burn for an hour; if there be no oil to put in again it will go out. God's grace is the oil that fills the lamp of love. If there be one thing above all others that every woman should say to herself in the beginning of her married life, it is this: "I can not be respected and loved, as I must needs be to be happy, unless I can bring something more than myself. It must be God in me that shall maintain me in that dignity and fullness of influence and impressiveness that shall win and keep my husband's love." A godless woman entering into the marriage relation goes as a lamb to the slaughter; wreaths of flowers may be around her neck, but the knife is not far off. Desecration of love is the saddest thing on earth. There is

nothing, it seems to me, that touches the contemplative heart more than that; to see what love might be, if its early days be prophets of possibility, and then to see what it is. More than for any thing else in the world, love fails for want of food, and no other food for love is there but goodness. Love can no more burn without goodness than the flame can without fuel. The sorrows that must go with you through all your life, or break constantly upon you somewhere, can not be borne without God's ministering angels. As your household grows around you, and your children begin to feel the tides of life, and you become in turn their guides, as your parents were yours, you will find that no one can bear life well who has not got somewhere the "present help in time of trouble." If there be any thing that young wedded love should have as its first vision, it should be a vision of a ladder between the earth and heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending, and God over all, blessing it. Then there is hope. Begin your household life, begin your wedded life with a firm hold upon God, and purity, and heaven, and there is hope for you; otherwise, sad is your fate.

II. Young men, let me say a word to you. In the beginning of your plans in life there are two ways opening before every one of you: one lies literally along the surface of the earth, the other leads from earth toward heaven. Either of them may include a certain degree of worldly prosperity. The one makes a man's whole experience worldly; the other gives him possession of worldly joys, but makes these the germs of higher and nobler ones. There are here in these great cities, or have gone from here, tens of thousands of young men who have literally followed the patriarch's example; they have left their father's house. Some are exiled on a foreign shore; some are on the sea, or are to be; some are in remote states; some have come from the rural districts to the city, from old occupations to new and untried ones. Now what a glorious beginning of life is that by which a young man consecrates himself, in the very first step, and

distinctly purposes with himself, and promises to his God that he will unite earthly pursuits and ambitions with heavenly ambitions and pursuits: "I will never dissever my connection with heaven. My ladder shall stand on the ground, but its top shall never come down from the heavenly rest." This is not your planning. You were wise if it were; but it is not your planning. Oh, the wantonness and the shame of those who early essay to dispossess life of its moral restraints and influences; for there be many of those who make use of their first liberty and escape from home to disown parental instructions; they are not to be tied to father and mother by leading-strings any longer; they mean to have liberty, supposing that *liberty* and *license* are one and the same thing; they mean to understand more of life, as if knowledge of life were to be found by groveling in the lower experiences of animal nature, in appetite and self-indulgence. There be many who suppose that knowledge is increased by knowing more of morbid things. Blessed are they whose visions, as they leave the watch-care and instructions of father and mother, are of angels ascending and descending; who accept the vision, and in their strivings for prosperity and wisdom vow as Jacob did:

"If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

There are some here to-day who have never become thus depraved; but there are some whom I have exactly described; and it seems to them, perhaps, while I am speaking, to be a little strange that when they first came down to New York to enter upon business, the first sermon they heard should be one in which the minister recalled to their mind their separation from home, and their prospects in business, and urged them to start in life by a consecration of their business energy and of their worldly wisdom to the service of God, and they almost feel that there is a supersti-

tion in it. There is something better than superstition in it; there is a divine Providence in it. Let me hope that there is an effectual divine influence in it that shall induce you to begin aright, and persevere in the right.

Do not reserve goodness to follow after prosperity. Some men mean to have an Indian summer of piety by-and-by, but the spring and the real summer they mean to devote to wickedness—not to unprofitable, but to *profitable* wickedness. Indian summer shimmers in the air for two weeks; nothing grows in it; it makes things seem beautiful; it is a pretty sentiment, but it has no other use. An old man's piety is a very good garment to die in; let us hope that the wearer escapes out of life with some sort of safety. But suppose that a man, in the day of battle, when his country's fate hung in the scale, should play the coward all day long, until the last moment, what would you call such a man as that? Yet here is God's great army, fighting, in desperate need of every recruit, and every man is called to be a soldier in it; and yet men enter life proposing to themselves deliberately, "All this battle through I will be on the wrong side. God, be thou forgotten, and be gracious while I forget you. Angels, do not hinder me; help me if you can; but I mean to have no restraint from you. When I have got through, and have won my honors, and enjoyed my pleasures, and amassed my property, and have nothing else to do, I will give the ends of the fagots, that are nearly burned out, to light myself up with a final piety which shall answer as a sort of mean insurance at the close of life." Is that honor? Can any man, after making such a deliberate bargain, look upon himself with complacency? Yet stop! There are not a few of *you* that now shrink from this view, and feel that it is dishonorable, because you have never pictured it to yourself in this way, yet are doing this very thing. I therefore but interpret the meaning of your conduct to you; and I beseech of you, do not so vilely use this life, that was given you as a price put into your hands wherewith to purchase eternal wisdom.

III. Let us all look back. You that are now young no longer, what has been the success of those plans that were to have been altogether good when you entered life? You entered life not meaning to do any thing bad. Peradventure you intended to do much that was good. Look back and see what has been the fulfillment of all your promises. How does the life that you have actually lived compare with that ideal life that you proposed to live? Have you no testimony to give? If God should call you back again to start in life, would you live your life over again just as you have? Were there no fundamental mistakes? Are there no passions whose mastery you would disallow, and whose blight you have felt? Is there no experience that would corroborate the testimony of God's word, that righteousness is prosperity; and that the higher the scale of motives which man brings to bear upon business, the better is it even for business, even setting aside its moral influence upon character? Is a man to go through life working out these great moral problems, and thus come to results which are of vital importance to the young, then to be dumb, and never bear witness? Would Isaiah have done right, when God's Spirit inspired him with great truths, if he had refused to utter them? Does not God all your life inspire you with truths of which you are bound to be a witness? Men sometimes declare, "I am a Christian, but I have nothing to say," and yet the most momentous problems of moral being have been wrought out in your history. You have lived a life that is more wonderful than was the original circumnavigation of the globe. Captain Cook's voyages are mere child's play compared with the voyage that every grown man in this audience has made. The experiences which you have known, interpreted in the light of God's truth, are of momentous importance. Yet you are all dumb! Old men are walking out of life, and leaving young men behind them, without testimony or warning, but bearing witness, rather, by their silence, that the best way to live is to enter life as a sordid worldling, and continue, through all the

ripest years of life, a mere secular agent, and at last put a little varnish, and hustle about them a few virtues, without ever uttering a word of testimony for Jesus. Where are those angels you used to see? Did you ever examine your angels? Don't you remember how you used to sit in the kitchen door, or around the stove, and look out at the sun setting, or hear the crickets chirp, or the clock tick, until by those natural influences your senses were charmed, and your imagination took wing? Did you never sit and sing "Roslyn Castle" until you cried, or "Home, sweet Home" until your heart melted? Did you never, in those hours, think of what you would be or do? Did you never build your house, or lead in your companion? Oh, what angels you saw in those early days! What are the angels now? Look along your ledger of life—along your life plans. Is it devoutness? is it conscience, pure and sensitive? is it faith? is it holy hope? is it true generosity and disinterested love that you see ascending and descending, to the exclusion of all other inspirations, along the ways of your life? Is it not, rather, haggard pride? is it not smirking vanity? is it not dripping lust? Are they not angels of Moloch, and Baal, and Mammon? Are not those angels ministrant which you knew in your childhood all gone? and when you look upon your life, are there not in their places these passions that are playing up and down the ways of life? Are not these your angels?

Where is your God? Have you not lived afar from him ever since you were young? Once, access to him was easy; is it now? Once, the heart was open to divine influences; is it now? Is there not the breadth of your life between you and your God? While others have been drawing nearer, hour by hour, to the celestial city, your life has been hourly taking you farther and farther away. Are there not things that you have been doing—I do not mean that you have been betrayed into by momentary passion—but are there not deliberate acts of yours in the doing of which you have had to cringe, and which, once being done, you have sought to cover

over and to deceive even your secret selves? Are there not portions of your life that have been so bad that you have had to bribe your conscience to silence? Are you not living in such a way that if you were to be lifted into the presence of God and his angels, you would be filled with shame and contempt?

You have been living a life that reaches up like a Tower of Babel between you and your God! Because your life has been so bad thus far, will you go on to the end doing worse and worse? It is in the power of one good angel to drive a hundred bad ones away. The sword of the Lord is greater than all the army of hell. If you have lived an evil life—if you have gone wrong hitherto, it is not too late to turn. Though it is a base thing for a young man to purpose to use his life against God, and then, in the end, have piety enough to save him; although that is dishonorable, yet, when a man has squandered his earlier life, base as it is, and wicked as it is, it is even baser and more wicked to continue wicked to the very end. It is better to be saved at the eleventh hour than not to be saved at all. You can not afford to be lost. You can not afford to lose reason, nor conscience, nor pure affection, nor God, the Great Lover!

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

A noble life, begun early and completed wisely, looks to me like a fair building which taste erects. The left hand is taste, and the right hand wealth. Although, when the house is being built, men do not see exactly what is meant, beholding dirt thrown out, the materials scattered around, and the workmen's chips and shavings, the mortar and the lime surrounding and the scaffold hiding it, yet, when the building is completed, the scaffolding taken down, the soil and dirt removed, and the household are moved in, and the lights burn in the windows, and there is music in every room, and love consecrates every hall and passage, how beautiful then is that accomplished building! Such is the life of a good man. A

bad man, whose life is a failure in all its moral purposes—what is that? It is like the burned districts in Charleston—which was the saddest sight I ever saw in my life. I walked up and down its streets, and took a lesson which, if I were to live a thousand years, would never die out of me. It was a city of my own land. I loved it as I love my own. The fire had devoured it. There stood the stacks of chimneys, gaunt against the avenging sky; and there stood the tottering walls; and there huge heaps of noisome materials, where reptiles resorted; weeds grew rankly, and the dried stalks of last year's weeds grimly stood thick all around. Street after street was marked with emptiness and desolation. Such seems to me to be the life of many a man, all the ways of whose life are cumbered with the wrecks of the past, and all of whose plans at last shall perish as with an eternal fire and desolation. Oh, to live so, and to die so, and then to take the fate of the other life as best you may—how piteous!

You that are starting, avoid the errors of those that have gone too fast and too far.

You that are old, bear witness for yourselves, and seek to repair, as far as you can, the errors of your own lives by warning and directing the young.

Young men, lift up your life-plans to the heavens.

Maidens, look to the God of your fathers.

If there be any one in this world who, more than another, can not afford not to be a Christian, it is a woman. If there be any one whose beauty fades as a flower and whose grace needs the sustenance of the ineffable; if there be any one whose power is in beauty, in purity, in goodness, it is a woman. If there be any one more than another upon whom blight falls more rudely; if there be any one more than another who is more burdened with grief or more wrung with sorrow, it is a woman. I marvel to see a woman that is not a Christian. The ladder between your souls and God is not half so long as that between our souls and God. God

made woman to be better than man, and the perversion is in proportion when she is worse.

I beseech every young man and every maiden that is beginning life to begin it aright. *Now* is the time. Days are passing. Years are accumulating. It will be too late by-and-by. Begin *now*.

XXII.

The State of Christianity To-day.

Preached in Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, in the Winter of 1867–8.

The State of Christianity To-day.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."—Romans, viii., 3.

This is a distinct statement that the religious system of the Jews had come to the end of its influence. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ had come to do. The Jewish system of religion had carried mankind as far as it could. It had educated them to a point where, while they had need of more, it had nothing more to give. It is called elsewhere a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. As a teacher in a primary school educates a child up to a certain extent, and while the child must go on, the teacher can do no more, but passes him to another school or another teacher, so the law was the schoolmaster in the primary school, and sent forward its pupils in the fullness of time into a higher school, where Christ was to give them farther instruction and development.

It is becoming common in many quarters in our day to hear men speak of the Christian religion in the manner in which Paul spoke of the Jewish. It is patronizingly said, It has done a good work; it has introduced certain important elements into human society; but men are so far educated by it now that it is no longer able to meet the want of our times; but from some source, from the human soul, or a divine revelation of a new sort, we are to expect something like a latter-day glory, which will be to Christianity what Christianity was to Judaism.

It is a part of this habit to represent churches, and minis-

ters, and religious life in our own time as decaying and dying out. One would think, to hear the utterances of some men—and some men, too, that stand in pulpits—that we were in Jerusalem two thousand years ago.

Now is there any evidence that the Christian faith is beginning to wane? Has the function of the Christian Church come nearly to its end? This is a practical question.

I. In the first place, where are those men who give evidences of having exhausted all the nutrition which there is in Christianity; all that in Christianity which inspires and develops aspiration toward God? Where are those men that have reproduced in themselves all the goodness that there was in Jesus Christ? Where are those men that have exhausted those influences in the New Testament which prompt self-denial and self-sacrifice? Where are those men that have so grown in equity and purity that there is nothing more to be learned by them? Where are those men that have rounded out the orb of their benevolence, and brightened it to such an extent that they are now like some full-grown moon, looking around for another sun to shine upon them? I have never seen these men; certainly not among those who are most ready to speak of Christianity getting into its dotage.

I have found men who had just enough originality to unsettle their own minds, to raise questions upon themes infinite and in their very nature transcending investigation; and who can not, upon such themes, raise questions that unsettle his own mind? I have seen good men, but none entirely good; men pure enough and benevolent enough, as the world measures; but I never have seen or heard of a man who had exhausted the whole Gospel, and needed more.

II. It is said that at any rate churchism is wearing out; that men no longer frequent the house of God. That never has been an easily besetting sin. I think they do fully as much as ever they did. But, even if it were true that churches are wearing out, churches are one thing, and religion is another. The church is no more religion than the masonry of the aque-

duct is the water that flows in it. Schools are a very different thing from intelligence, though intelligence uses them as instruments; so churches are merely instruments of religion. They may vary, though the truth remains the same. For churches are not divine. Religion is, but churches are not.

I know there are other claims, sometimes modest and sometimes arrogant, upon this subject. But there is no more exact pattern for churches in the New Testament than there is for common schools or for civil government. There are unquestionably intimations of church organization, but nowhere has there been authoritatively laid down the foundation or given the outlines for church government or church worship. Churches, therefore, may change through all gradations and degrees without changing in one single iota the substance of religion.

A man may begin with his household—his wife and children—in a cottage. With growing abundance, he may add room to room, hall to hall, until it becomes largely increased. The household is the same—the house changes. As still his wants or ambition increase, he may pull down all this, and lay a new foundation, and carry up another structure. The house is different, but the household is the same. So you may change the form of the Church and the methods of its worship without affecting religion; for these are but the exterior instruments of religion.

But besides this, the spirit of man, in religion, intermits. There has never been a steady growth in any thing, neither in the discoveries of science, nor in the progress of government, nor in religious life. Always growth comes by intermissions, and it would not be strange if it should be so in the Church. If, then, there is now a decadence of interest in religion, it might show simply that we are in one of these stages of temporary inactivity. But I do not believe the fact to be as it is stated.

It may be true that churches in New York are not as fertile as they once were. It may be that in certain sections

Church life is comparatively receding. But, looking at our land comparatively, I affirm unhesitatingly that the Church was never more vital, never more active, never proved its origin, its use, its influence more than to-day. It was never more earnest. Never were there signs of a more glorious future to it than to-day. All these croakings of men, and all these predictions that religion has done its work, and that we are to look for a new revelation, are based upon insufficient facts and inconclusive reasonings.

III. It may be said that the thinking men, the first men of our time, particularly in the direction of science, are less and less believers in revelation. It may be said that the controlling minds in science to-day are men of natural religion, if any at all, and not men of revealed religion. And the statement has some truth in it. The young minds in Germany and France, certainly the youthful scholars of science in England, and, to a certain extent, in our own country, seem to be pointing away from revelation. But just now we are to remember the whole world is intensely occupied with material interests. Science predominates.

Sometimes, in the history of the human intellect, one element in society takes precedence of every other, and absorbs every thing, cheating the other elements. In some ages it is the religious element which has the first place; in others it is cold, hard thought; then this has given way to periods of enthusiastic and even superstitious devotion. Just now we are in a period in which the human mind is working in a most unbalanced degree toward mere material investigations. But we shall certainly come to another period ere long. If now the spiritual elements are cheated, as they certainly are; if naturalists are in the ascendency over the spiritualist school, the time will not be long delayed when these things will begin to balance themselves, and the speculations which are now so purely material will begin to be supplemented anew with spiritual speculations. The world never can be understood from what is taking place at any particu-

lar period of time. We happen just now to be in the cycle of scientific skepticism. The world has seen just such cycles before, and outlives them, and it will outlive them again.

But periods of transition and advance are apt to unsettle men. It is not a sign that religion is decaying because there is a certain unsettling of religious questions; because there are a great many questions that may be unsettled properly. There has to be in every age a restatement of religious truth. There is no one exact mathematical mode of stating religious truth. It is relative to men; relative to institutions, times, manners, customs; and whenever any nation moves forward in these respects, it is indispensable to restate the great primary problems of religion. This implies a certain remission of forms, a certain transition. Transition periods are almost always periods of doubt and uncertainty. But the undying necessities of the human soul force men again to religious truth, no matter how much they may have doubted or been unsettled. So soon as that growth which seems to unsettle the old faith has adjusted itself, the religious wants of the soul reassert themselves, and ere long the old statements are overlaid with new religious developments, and with religious truth in new forms.

In many of our river valleys, freshets frequently cover the old soil many, many inches deep, and all its grasses and flowers are hid by the mud and buried there. But after a time seeds and roots begin to germinate, and soon a richer vegetation than ever works in on that very same soil, so that the river bottom is never abandoned and never becomes a desert. The old growths may cease by the superimposition of a new soil, but the new soil itself must be covered with a new growth.

As it is in nature, so it is in the human soul. I expect increasing knowledge; and by increasing knowledge I expect that there will be better methods. With increasing mind, there ought to be more skill in preaching. There ought to be better discernment of the nature of the human mind, and

therefore better methods of society. There ought to be great improvements in education. But all these changes may take place without in the slightest degree affecting the more fundamental elements of revealed religion in nature, the necessity of the human soul for the doctrine of immortality, and that blessed doctrine of redemption through Jesus Christ, which is the highway to immortality.

IV. Hitherto we have merely considered the statements that are made. Let us now, on the other hand, inquire positively as to the condition of religious influences.

1. Is there a decadence of faith among Christians and in the community? Is the spirit of the age, in the Church or out of it, one of indifference? Very far from it. On the contrary, probably never in the world's history was there an age in which there was so deep and serious a religious faith as there is now—a tendency to belief, a desire to believe, a hunger of believing.

What men call a want of faith is oftentimes the very opposite. It is the unwillingness of men to accept so little as hitherto has been included in the articles of faith. It is the reaching out of the soul in new aspirations, new longings. It is asking for more, not for less. By a mistake of terms, men frequently call this an unsettling. It is growing—the growing of fundamental instinct and of true piety. This deeper hunger for change, if at all, is because the past is too narrow, and the future broader and broader.

That there are some schools out of which faith is cast; that there are cold, unbelieving, indifferent, scoffing natures, I will not deny. But the very skepticism of our age is not marked by these things. They are exceptional. There is no such bitterness in unbelief; there is no such hatred and malignity in skepticism as there used to be. Indeed, the great schools of skepticism in our day are sombre, sad, wearisome; and if they do disbelieve, they do not want to.

2. Is the devotional spirit decayed in our day? In certain directions it may be. There may be found barren spots. I

will admit, too, that the devotional spirit in our day is changing. It ought to change. Fear and awe are the first forms in which the devotional spirit exercises itself. They belong to the childhood of religion. Now, as progress in intelligence raises men into a better conception of God, as the new spirit reveals man's place in creation more clearly than it was known in the beginning of time, there will be a new mode of reverence, a new method of devotion. Men trained to liberty, to citizenship, to an intelligent understanding of their own rights, to the fatherhood of God, can never be expected to worship in the same spirit that they would if they had been trained in despotism, without any knowledge of human rights or man's place in creation, and with only the idea that God is a monarch, absolute as earthly monarchs are. But with a better knowledge, man's whole conception of society, his whole idea of man's place in creation, is changed; and with that change, haply, is also changed the spirit of his devotion. For the element of love has greatly increased; so that now, while there seems to be lost out of modern experience much of that which made the old devotion grand and even gloomy, I think there is far more of the experience of the household, far more of the filial spirit, far more of the richness of love, far more that will endure and that will fructify through the ages. The devotional spirit, though far less ascetic than it was, is more prevalent; and there is also its reflection in the community, more emphatic, namely, respect for religion.

3. The propagating spirit of any faith is an indication of its vitality. What is the condition in this regard of the Christian religion? The ornamental and architectural period of a faith is the period in which the ethical has run into the æsthetic. It is stationary usually, and not far from the period of decay. But the propagating spirit is very different. Now never, certainly in the history of this nation, was there so much as to-day a spirit of propagating the Christian faith. Never were so much pains taken to rear men for

teaching it. Never was there so large a demand, and so large a supply of its instruments, in the form of religious books and papers; and, above all, never was there such a spirit of building churches and supplying them in waste and destitute places. Millions upon millions of money, thousands upon thousands of men and women, every year, steadfastly follow the swift-flowing tide of emigration into the new states and all the waste places throughout this broad land. Churches and school-houses come almost as soon as the settler's cottage is erected. Thousands of churches every year lift up their witnessing spires toward heaven; to-day a prairie, to-morrow a village, the next day the school and the church; and this not once or twice, but every where; so that the bread that supplies the body is scarcely accounted more the staff of life than is that other loaf that supplies the soul. They go hand in hand every where. Does this look as though Christianity were losing its vitality? as though its force were spent?

4. Look at it in another point of view. What is the testimony of your observation in respect to the religious spirit as it exhibits itself in the household? because this is one of the most important elements in the judgment. Is the family to-day less or more under the influence of a true spiritual Christianity than it formerly was? Is there as much animalism, as much passion, as much grossness in the household as in former times? There never was a period in the history of the world when there were so many high-toned and pure Christian families as to-day. There never was a period in the history of man when there were so many altars, and so many intelligent men capable of being priests at the altar of the household; never a time when affection was lifted up to a higher plane; when the love husband and wife bore to each other so nearly mingled with the love they bore to their Father in heaven, and in which the family was so near the gate of heaven as it is to-day.

5. Has the Christian religion shown any signs of failing as

a reforming power? It came into the world, in part, to do a positive work. It came also to do an erasive work. It was to correct evil as well as to establish good. We have just passed through one of the greatest battles in history. What has been the source of that influence which called this nation to its debt of conscience, and aroused it from its torpor? For years the unwilling ear was besieged, and the repugnant heart assaulted. Whence came these doctrines of human liberty? Whence came those clear, those fervid truths of humanity, that aroused the nation's heart and the nation's conscience, and fortified it to bear all that it had to endure carrying on to victory the great conflict that now happily is terminated? Were those truths that sprung from some new sphere, unuttered, unknown before? Were not the very truths that have aroused this nation and given it a new enthusiasm, or revived and made practical the old—were they not the long-neglected doctrines of human rights—the doctrines of the Puritans, of the Reformers, of Christianity and the New Testament? And are we, just as we are gathering the trophies, just as we are beginning to see the laurels from one of the noblest conflicts the Gospel has incited and achieved, are we at this moment to bewail the waning forces of the Gospel? Is it the time, when men are victors, for them to begin to doubt whether their weapons have power in them?

Is the power of Christianity failing in its application to the morals of the day? Is there less conscience, less hope, less desire to cleanse and purify the individual, less earnest purpose to reform communities to-day than there has been in the past? More; more here, more in England, more on the Continent than there ever has been before.

We must not judge of the state of the Christian world by what we find in such cities as this, where the confluent streams of immigration fill us with mud. For as the deltas of the Nile and the Mississippi are formed by the soil of continents washed down, so here we have the detritus of the world cast

down upon us. But even in New York and Brooklyn I believe there never was a time when there were so many men that prayed, so many that labored for the community's morals, so many with vigorous faith, so many men able to show their faith by its fruit, as to-day. Consider the Temperance reformation. It is not a movement of the Church, although, thanks to God, there are a great many churches warmly engaged in it. But go with the different associations; look at the men who are carrying out this work—men of varied station, statesmen, merchants, draymen, mechanics, laborers of all kinds, many of whom are in the Church, more of whom perhaps are not. Tell me whether there is throughout the whole community a decadence. Tell me whether that spirit which is kindled at the altar does not go forth, and penetrate, though in decreasing strength, to the extremest parts of the community.

Let the men who are crying out that their liberties are invaded be our witnesses. Let those men who are beginning to be so uneasy, because they are not at liberty with impunity to desecrate the Sabbath-day, be our witnesses. Religion dying? What then mean the execrations of wicked men? The Church losing its power? Why then are men so berating the Church? Why are they so complaining of its intrusion, telling us to stay at home and preach the Gospel, and not to meddle with things that do not concern us? It is the light which streams from the Gospel which wakes the owls and the bats. Those birds of the night know what ails them, and it is that there is a spirit of true religion working out toward the reformation of the community; never more than now, and never more needed.

6. Has the Christian spirit lost its power over government and public affairs? I think the conscience of our community never was so high as it is to-day. The last triumph of the Gospel will be the triumph manifested in public administrations. Selfishness, and a very low standard of justice, must be expected, in the average of our communities, to continue

to the last. Nevertheless, I think no man who is accustomed to study the phases of affairs but must admit that there is a higher tone of conscience in public affairs to-day—I will not say in Legislatures, but in the community; and Legislatures, reflecting the public sentiment of the community, are enforcing a higher degree of justice than has heretofore been known in the history of our nation.

And that which is true of our land is true of England. The movement of her middle and lower classes for justice and equal rights is a movement for a larger manhood. The movements upon the Continent are scarcely less obvious; they are in the same direction, and come from the same source. Every where is the Gospel leavening public administrations, and raising up an intelligent Christian public sentiment which is itself as powerful upon governments as winds are upon the sails of ships.

If these things be so, are we quite ready yet to assume the condition of mourning? Do we need to give up our Bibles? Need we drop our faith in Christ, our faith in the providence of God, our faith in the instrumentality of the Church, our faith in the power of revealed religion? On the contrary, of all periods of the world, this would be the last that I should have chosen to lift up my hands in despair and say, Religion is dying out, and must yield to a new dispensation. There have been some who have desired to bring a new revelation; but it was like the foam of the restless sea chafing upon the shore, which, when a man had gathered it, had not substance enough to keep its form even while he looked upon it.

We may expect some changes, but none other than to deepen religious life and faith in religious truth. There will be a better understanding of the human heart. There will be better modes of reaching it with religious truth. There will be modifications of worship. Some things will be left off; many things will be added; but no amount of change in these external instrumentalities will affect in the slightest

degree the power of the religious element—the spiritual element in man. Nature, well interpreted, will throw more and more light upon God's methods of creation and of administration. And I doubt not we are yet to see the true glory of revelation in respect to God's character and God's administration. But it will be but the augmenting of that which we already have in the germ form. It will be but new illustrations of old truths. Old obscurities will be cleared up, and old errors corrected; but, in the main, the views which have already developed themselves in the minds of the Christian world upon the nature of God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — will remain unchanged. They will grow brighter and clearer; but, I take it, there are no signs to show they will be essentially modified.

The instrumentalities of religion hereafter, we may believe, will be more various. Laws, and customs, and institutions, being filled with a religious spirit, will become means of grace to a degree that hitherto they have never done. More and more will be done by extra ecclesiastical efforts, while, at the same time, no less will be done by direct Church influences.

What then? These changes and modifications do not argue the decadence of the religious element, but simply the expansion of its instrumentality. Hence the folly of all attempts to do away with the Church on the one side, and the equal folly of attempts to confine all that is to be done within the Church. Both of them are extremes, and both of them are extremes of folly.

There are a great many that think preaching is worn out. There is a great deal of preaching worn out. A great many people think churches useless. There are a great many churches individually useless. Would you judge the family in the same way? Would you say the fatherhood is worn out because there are a great many poor husbands and fathers? Would you say the family is all gone to ruin because there are a great many drunkards, and gamblers, and

forsaken families? There are isolated cases in the community where the Church and the ministry greatly need reformation, but he certainly is a bold man who at present would argue the need, propriety, wisdom, or safety of setting aside that which, for the present, may be considered the grand instrumentality by which God is keeping up the conscience and intoning the moral feeling. That there may come a day when the Church itself shall have so wrought out the religious life in the household that the household will take in hand that which now the Church does, I will not deny; but at present it is the enginery of God.

On the other hand, it seems to me that nothing can be so unwise as that misunderstanding spirit which is jealous of any good done except through the Church itself. That is like a schoolmaster who is waking the genius and intellect of a child, and who, when that child begins to point out new things in any direction, insists that the child shall not think any thing except through him. The glory of the schoolmaster is to make the child think more than the schoolmaster can. It is to multiply in his scholars the effects he could not individually produce. The glory of the Church is to multiply the men outside of the Church who work. Why do I preach here? Simply for the good that is done here? It is for the good which is done *out*, as much as for that which is done *in*. They that listen here are to go home and repeat the truth, often in better forms practically, frequently with better illustrations intellectually. They are to take up the Gospel, and reproduce its facts every where. This is but an altar whence every man is to take his kindling brand and go out of the Church to work every where. The Church may arouse the conscience to a higher morality, but it ought not to insist upon it that all efforts to advance morality shall be Church efforts. Do I preach temperance here? I ought to. But it should not prevent me from sympathizing with every organization outside of the Church for the promotion of temperance.

The attempts to include in the ecclesiastical bonds of the Church all moral instrumentalities is against the order of divine Providence and against possibilities. The Church was not meant for any such purpose as that. The sun might just as well say, "There shall be no growth except in the sun;" whereas its mission is to fructify all the planets, and carry life into worlds remote from itself. The true Church so conducts itself, and so inspires those around it, that the whole community becomes, as it were, in some sense, a collaterated Church, repeating its influences, echoing its joyful sounds, and carrying on the work outside its ecclesiastical bounds. The time will come when the whole community will be the Church; not by being brought within common walls, or by being included within denominational names, but because no man shall have occasion to say to his neighbor, "Know the Lord," but all shall know him, from the least to the greatest.

We are going on toward that day. This is not the time for any man to cast away his faith in that power which has brought us to this day, which has given us the artillery with which we have combated so long the powers of the world. Our fathers with their faith built this fair fabric. They laid its foundations in trust in God. Shall we take it down by enervating skepticism? They carried up its walls to the honor of his name and the glory of religion. And are we, dishonored and shrunken of spirit, to desecrate the altars which they left with sacred fires burning thereon?

There never was a time, young men, when you had so little occasion to be ashamed of Christ or of religion. There never was a time when you could so ill afford to throw all ecclesiastical influences behind your backs. There never was a time when there was more faith in God, in the Mediator, in the Holy Ghost, in the judgment day, in eternity. If men all around you, with all manner of books and papers, are telling you glozing tales of the decadence of religion, say to them, "Let the dead bury their dead," but follow thou Christ.

It is a deceit. It is a snare. It is a falsehood. The glory of religion was never so great. Its need was never more urgent. Its fruits were never more ample. Its ministers were never more inspired by God's ministering angels than now. May God grant that the glorious days of revival may come speedily, that shall fill the whole continent with their light and their warmth, as in the summer's sun, and may there grow up all virtue, and all morality, and all blessedness, from sea to sea, from the north to the extremest south; and then may the devotional spirit, still burning under the sacred influence, gird the world with salvation, that the whole earth may know the Lord.

TEXTS AND SCRIPTURE PASSAGES COMMENTED UPON.

[Those marked with an asterisk (*) are passages quoted and commented on in the body of the sermon. The others are the texts of the discourses.]

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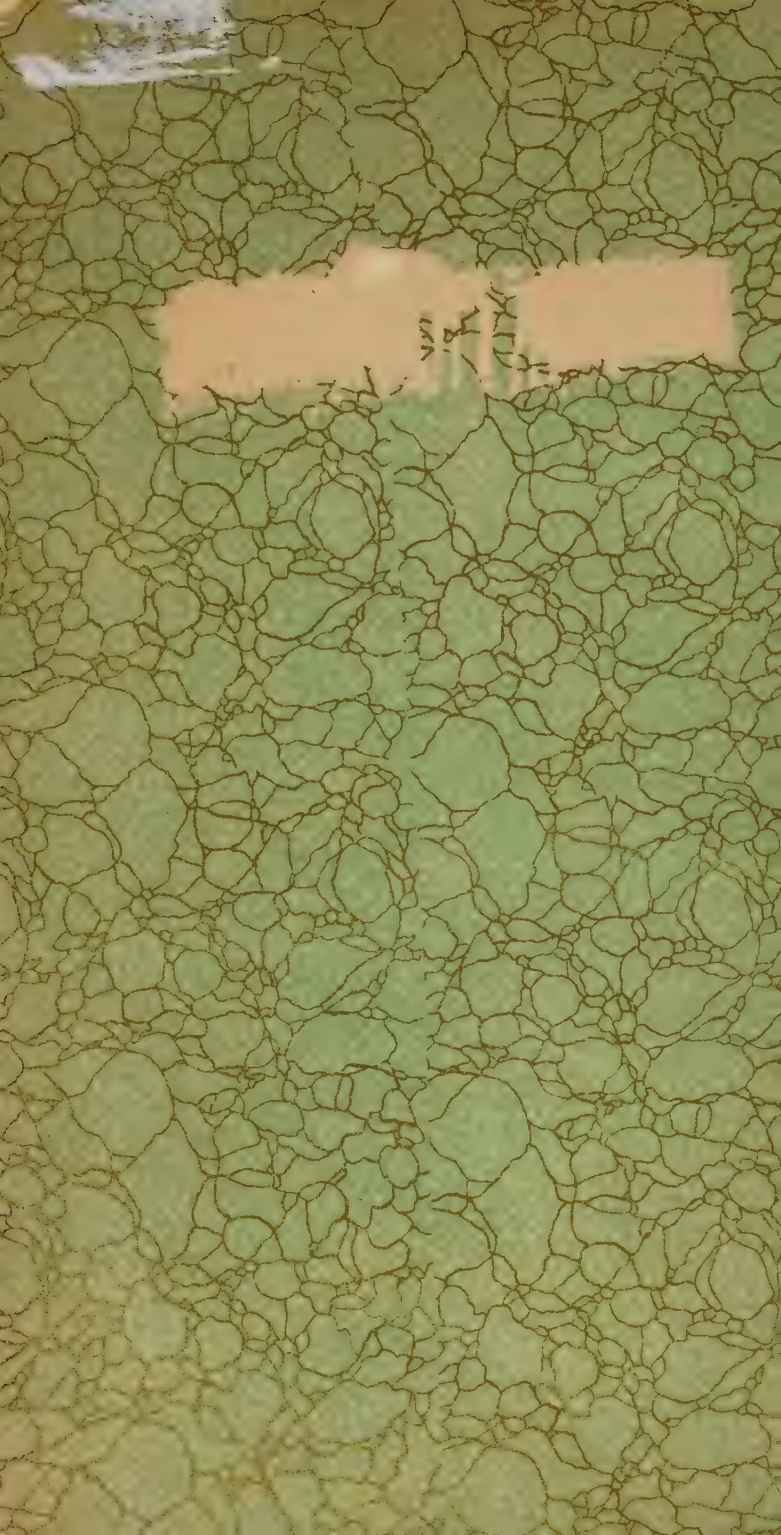

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